



**Fictions
of
Identity
in
Medieval
France**

•
**Donald
Maddox**

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In this study of vernacular French narrative from the twelfth century through the later Middle Ages, Donald Maddox considers the construction of identity in a wide range of fictions. He focuses on crucial encounters, widespread in medieval literature, in which characters are informed about fundamental aspects of their own circumstances and selfhood. These always arresting and highly significant moments of “specular” encounter are examined in numerous Old and Middle French romances, hagiographic texts, epics, and brief narratives. Maddox discloses the key role of identity in an original reading of the *Lais* of Marie de France as a unified collection, as well as in Arthurian literature, fictions of the courtly tryst, genealogies, and medieval family romance. The study offers many new perspectives on the poetic and cultural implications of identity as an imaginary construct during the long formative period of French literature.

DONALD MADDOX, Professor of French and Italian Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, is the author of numerous books and articles on the French Middle Ages, including *The Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes* (Cambridge, 1991).

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Fictions of Identity in Medieval France

DONALD MADDUX



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For Sara

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Abbreviations

JOURNALS AND SERIALS

<i>Annales ESC</i>	<i>Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations</i>
<i>AY</i>	<i>Arthurian Yearbook</i>
<i>BBSIA</i>	<i>Bulletin Bibliographique de la Société Internationale Arthurienne</i>
<i>BDBA</i>	<i>Bien Dire et Bien Apprendre</i>
<i>BMMLA</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association</i>
<i>CAIEF</i>	<i>Cahiers de l'Association Internationale des Etudes Françaises</i>
<i>CC</i>	<i>Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook</i>
<i>CCM</i>	<i>Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale</i>
<i>CN</i>	<i>Cultura Neolatina</i>
<i>Coll. Cist.</i>	<i>Collectanea Cisterciensa</i>
<i>Com</i>	<i>Communications</i>
<i>DS</i>	<i>Dante Studies</i>
<i>EC</i>	<i>Etudes Celtiques</i>
<i>ECr</i>	<i>L'Esprit Créateur</i>
<i>Eur</i>	<i>Europe: Revue Littéraire Mensuelle</i>
<i>FF</i>	<i>French Forum</i>
<i>FR</i>	<i>French Review</i>
<i>FRom</i>	<i>Filologia Romanza</i>
<i>FS</i>	<i>French Studies</i>
<i>HLF</i>	<i>Histoire Littéraire de la France</i>
<i>HT</i>	<i>History and Theory</i>
<i>IL</i>	<i>L'Information Littéraire</i>
<i>JMEMS</i>	<i>Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies</i>
<i>JMRS</i>	<i>Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies</i>
<i>KRQ</i>	<i>Kentucky Romance Quarterly</i>
<i>LR</i>	<i>Lettres Romanes</i>

List of abbreviations

<i>LS</i>	<i>Language and Style</i>
<i>MAev</i>	<i>Medium Aevum</i>
<i>MAGE</i>	<i>Le Moyen Age</i>
<i>MedP</i>	<i>Medieval Perspectives</i>
<i>M&H</i>	<i>Medievalia & Humanistica</i>
<i>MGH/S</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores</i>
<i>MLN</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
<i>MLR</i>	<i>Modern Language Review</i>
<i>MP</i>	<i>Modern Philology</i>
<i>MR</i>	<i>Medioevo Romanzo</i>
<i>MRom</i>	<i>Marche Romane</i>
<i>MRS</i>	<i>Michigan Romance Studies</i>
<i>MS</i>	<i>Medieval Studies</i>
<i>MW</i>	<i>Man and World</i>
<i>Neo</i>	<i>Neophilologus</i>
<i>NLH</i>	<i>New Literary History</i>
<i>O&C</i>	<i>Oeuvres et Critiques</i>
<i>op. cit.</i>	<i>op. cit.: Revue de littérature française et comparée</i>
<i>PBF</i>	<i>Programmheft der Bayreuther Festspiele</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Paroles Gelées</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
<i>PQ</i>	<i>Philological Quarterly</i>
<i>QM</i>	<i>Quaderni Medievali</i>
<i>RC</i>	<i>Revue Celtique</i>
<i>RF</i>	<i>Romanische Forschungen</i>
<i>RHT</i>	<i>Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre</i>
<i>RLR</i>	<i>Revue des Langues Romanes</i>
<i>RN</i>	<i>Romance Notes</i>
<i>Rom</i>	<i>Romania</i>
<i>RPh</i>	<i>Romance Philology</i>
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Romance Quarterly</i>
<i>RR</i>	<i>Romanic Review</i>
<i>Rzfl/CHLR</i>	<i>Romanistische Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte/Cahiers de l'histoire des littératures romanes</i>
<i>SFR</i>	<i>Stanford French Review</i>
<i>SM</i>	<i>Studi Medievali</i>
<i>SMS</i>	<i>Studier i modern språkvetenskap</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studies in Philology</i>

List of abbreviations

TLL	<i>Travaux de Linguistique et de Littérature</i>
UTQ	<i>University of Toronto Quarterly</i>
Versus	<i>Versus: Quaderni di Studi Semiotici</i>
VR	<i>Vox Romanica</i>
WG	<i>Die Welt als Geschichte</i>
YFS	<i>Yale French Studies</i>
ZfdP	<i>Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie</i>
ZffSL	<i>Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur</i>
ZfrP	<i>Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie</i>
ZfrSL	<i>Zeitschrift für romanische Sprache und Literatur</i>

COLLECTIVE VOLUMES

<i>Actes LPR</i>	Kremer, D., ed. <i>Actes du XVIII^e congrès international de littérature et de philologie romanes</i> . Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1988.
<i>ALMA</i>	Loomis, R. S., ed. <i>Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959.
<i>Amour</i>	Dufournet, J., ed. <i>Amour et merveille: Les Lais de Marie de France</i> . Paris: Champion, 1995.
<i>ACTR</i>	Frappier, J. <i>Amour courtois et table ronde</i> . Geneva: Droz, 1973.
<i>Approches</i>	Dufournet, J., ed. <i>Approches du Lancelot en prose</i> . Paris: Champion, 1984.
<i>Arturus</i>	Van Hoeske, W. et al., eds. <i>Arturus Rex II: Acta Conventus Lovaniensis 1987</i> . Leuven: University Press, 1991.
<i>Aspects</i>	Maddox, D. and S. Sturm-Maddox, eds. <i>Literary Aspects of Courtly Culture</i> . Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994.
<i>Buschinger</i>	Crépin, A. and W. Spiewok, eds. <i>Tristan-Tristrant: Mélanges Danielle Buschinger</i> . Greifswald: Reineke-Verlag, 1996.
<i>Caplan</i>	Wallach, L., ed. <i>The Classical Tradition: Literary and Historical Studies in Honor of Harry Caplan</i> . Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell, 1966.
<i>Carrefour</i>	<i>Au Carrefour des routes d'Europe: la chanson de geste</i> . Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 1987.
<i>La Chasse</i>	<i>La Chasse au Moyen Age</i> . Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1972.
<i>Le Chevalier</i>	Dufournet, J., ed. <i>Le Chevalier et la merveille dans "Le Bel Inconnu", ou le beau jeu de Renaut</i> . Paris: Champion, 1996.
<i>Conjunctures</i>	Busby, K. and N. J. Lacy, eds. <i>Conjunctures: Medieval Studies in Honor of Douglas Kelly</i> . Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994.
<i>Contexts</i>	Poirion, D. and N. Regalado, eds. <i>Contexts: Style and Value in</i>

List of abbreviations

- Medieval Art and Literature*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991.
- Continuations* Lacy, N. J. and G. Torrini-Roblin, eds. *Continuations: Essays on Medieval French Literature and Language in Honor of John L. Grigsby*. Birmingham, Ala.: Summa, 1989.
- Court* Mullally, E. and J. Thompson, eds. *The Court and Cultural Diversity*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997.
- C and P* Burgess, G., ed. *Court and Poet: Selected Proceedings of the Third Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society*. Liverpool: Cairns, 1981.
- Courtly* Busby, K. and E. Kooper, eds. *Courtly Literature, Culture and Context*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990.
- Craft* Arrathoon, L., ed. *The Craft of Fiction: Essays in Medieval Poetics*. Rochester, Mich.: Solaris, 1984.
- Cyc* B. Besamusca, F. Brandsma, W. Gerritsen, and O. Lie, eds. *Cyclification: The Development of Narrative Cycles in the Chansons de Geste and the Arthurian Romances*. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1994.
- Le Droit* Buschinger, D., ed. *Le Droit et sa perception dans la littérature et les mentalités médiévales*. Göppingen: Kummerle, 1993.
- Dufournet* *Et c'est la fin por quoy sommes ensemble: Hommage à Jean Dufournet, Professeur à la Sorbonne Nouvelle. Littérature, histoire et langue du Moyen Age*. 3 vols. Paris: Champion, 1993.
- Eigeldinger* *Le Lieu et la formule: Hommage à Marc Eigeldinger*. Neuchâtel: La Baconnière, 1979.
- L'Enfant* *L'Enfant au Moyen Age*. Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 1980.
- Entretiens* Gandillac, M. de and E. Jauneau, eds. *Entretiens sur la renaissance du XII^e siècle*. The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1968.
- L'Erotisme* Roy, B., ed. *L'Erotisme au Moyen Age*. Montréal: Aurore, 1977.
- Father* Davis, R. C., ed. *The Fictional Father: Lacanian Readings of the Text*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981.
- Folena* *Omaggio a Gianfranco Folena*. Modena: Programma, 1980.
- Foulon* *Mélanges de langue et littérature françaises du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Charles Foulon*. I: Rennes: Université de Haute Bretagne, 1980; II: *Marche Romane*, vol. xxx, nos. 3 and 4 (1980).
- France* Jondorf, G. and D. Dumville, eds. *France and the British Isles in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*. Woodbridge: Boydell, 1991.

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<i>Frappier</i>	<i>Du Moyen Age à la Renaissance: Etudes d'histoire et de critique littéraire.</i> Paris: Champion, 1976.
<i>Gardens</i>	MacDougall, E., ed. <i>Medieval Gardens.</i> Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1986.
<i>Gender</i>	Chance, J., ed. <i>Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages.</i> Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida, 1996.
<i>Graal</i>	Nelli, R., ed. <i>Les Romans du graal dans la littérature médiévale des XII^e et XIII^e siècles.</i> Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1956.
<i>Grundriss</i>	<i>Grundriss der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters</i> , vol. IV, 2. Heidelberg: Winter, 1984.
<i>L'Humanisme</i>	Fourrier, A., ed. <i>L'Humanisme médiéval dans les littératures romanes du XII^e au XIV^e siècle.</i> Paris: Klincksieck, 1964.
<i>Ideals</i>	Harper-Bill, C. and R. Harvey, eds. <i>Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood II.</i> Woodbridge: Boydell, 1986.
<i>Images</i>	Blumenfeld-Kosinski, R. and T. Szell, eds. <i>Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe.</i> Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell, 1991.
<i>L'Imaginaire</i>	Angeli, G. and L. Formisano, eds. <i>L'Imaginaire courtois et son double.</i> Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1992.
<i>Jeux</i>	Roy, B., ed. <i>Jeux de mémoire.</i> Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1985.
<i>Jonin</i>	<i>Mélanges de langue et littérature françaises du Moyen Age, offerts à Pierre Jonin.</i> Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA/Paris: Champion, 1979.
<i>Kibler</i>	Kibler, W. ed. <i>The Lancelot-Grail Cycle: Text and Transformations.</i> Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.
<i>Köhler</i>	<i>Mittelalterstudien, Erich Köhler zum gedenken.</i> Heidelberg: Winter, 1984.
<i>Legacy</i>	Lacy, N. J., K. Busby, and D. Kelly, eds. <i>The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes.</i> 2 vols. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987, 1988.
<i>Le Gentil</i>	<i>Mélanges de langue et de littérature médiévales offerts à Pierre Le Gentil.</i> Paris: SEDES, 1973.
<i>Lejeune</i>	<i>Mélanges offerts à Rita Lejeune.</i> 2 vols. Gembloux: Duculot, 1969.
<i>Liebe</i>	Schulze, P., ed. <i>Liebe und Aventure in Artusroman des Mittelalters.</i> Göppingen: Kummerle, 1990.
<i>L and P</i>	Kurzweil, E. and W. Phillips, eds. <i>Literature and Psychoanalysis.</i> New York: Columbia, 1983.
<i>La Litt.</i>	<i>La Littérature narrative d'imagination, des genres littéraires aux techniques d'expression.</i> Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961.

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<i>LPQRO</i>	Felman, S., ed. <i>Literature and Psychoanalysis: The Question of Reading: Otherwise</i> . Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.
<i>Medievalism</i>	Bloch, R. H. and S. G. Nichols, eds. <i>Medievalism and the Modernist Temper</i> . Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
<i>Mél. Bec</i>	<i>Mélanges de langue et de littérature occitanes en hommage à Pierre Bec</i> . Poitiers: CESC, 1991.
<i>Mél. Imbs</i>	<i>Mélanges de linguistique française et de philologie et littérature médiévales offerts à Paul Imbs</i> . Strasbourg: CPLR, 1973.
<i>Mél. Wathelet</i>	<i>Mélanges de philologie et de littérature romanes offerts à Jeanne Wathelet-Willem</i> . Liège: Marche Romane, 1978.
<i>Melusine</i>	Maddox, D. and S. Sturm-Maddox, eds. <i>Melusine of Lusignan: Founding Fiction in Late Medieval France</i> . Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996.
<i>Memory</i>	<i>Memory and the Middle Ages</i> . Chestnut Hill, Mass.: Boston College Museum of Art, 1995.
<i>Ménard</i>	Labbé, A., J.-C. Faucon, and D. Quérue, eds. <i>Miscellanea Medievalia: Mélanges offerts à Philippe Ménard</i> . 2 vols. Paris: Champion, 1998.
<i>Mimesis</i>	Lyons, J. and S. Nichols, eds. <i>Mimesis: From Mirror to Method, Augustine to Descartes</i> . Hanover, N.H.: University Presses of New England, 1982.
<i>Misrahi</i>	Runte, H., H. Niedzielski, and W. Hendrickson, eds. <i>Studies in the Seven Sages of Rome and Other Essays in Medieval Literature Dedicated to the Memory of Jean Misrahi</i> . Honolulu: Educational Research Associates, 1978.
<i>Mittelalter</i>	Ruhe, E. and R. Behrens, eds. <i>Mittelalterbilder aus neuer Perspektive: Würzburger Kolloquium</i> . Munich: Fink, 1986.
<i>Myth</i>	Sebeok, T. A., ed. <i>Myth: A Symposium</i> . Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972.
<i>Nature</i>	Grunmann-Gaudet, M. and R. F. Jones, eds. <i>The Nature of Medieval Narrative</i> . Lexington, Ky.: French Forum, 1980.
<i>New</i>	Brownlee, M., K. Brownlee, and S. Nichols, eds. <i>The New Medievalism</i> . Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.
<i>Nicodemus</i>	Izydorczyk, Z. <i>The Medieval "Gospel of Nicodemus": Texts, Intertexts, and Contexts in Western Europe</i> . Tempe, Ariz.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1997.

List of abbreviations

<i>La Nouvelle</i>	Picone, M., G. Di Stefano, and P. M. Stewart, eds. <i>La Nouvelle: Genèse, codification et rayonnement d'un genre médiéval</i> . Montréal: Plato, 1983.
<i>Opus</i>	Kelly, D., ed. <i>The Medieval Opus: Imitation, Rewriting, and Transmission in the French Tradition</i> . Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996.
<i>Orbis</i>	<i>Orbis Medievalis: Mélanges de langue et de littérature médiévales offerts à Reto Radulf Bezzola</i> . Berne: Francke, 1978.
<i>Pope</i>	<i>Studies in French Literature and Medieval Literature Presented to Professor Mildred K. Pope</i> . Manchester University Press, 1929.
<i>Psychoanalysis</i>	Hartman, G., ed. <i>Psychoanalysis and the Question of the Text</i> . Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.
<i>QAB</i>	Ashe, G., ed. <i>The Quest for Arthur's Britain</i> . St Albans: Paladin, 1975.
<i>Quest</i>	Maréchal, C. ed. <i>In Quest of Marie de France, A Twelfth Century Poet</i> . Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1993.
<i>Le Récit</i>	Buschinger, D., ed. <i>Le Récit bref au Moyen Age</i> . Amiens: Université de Picardie, 1980.
<i>Reid</i>	<i>History and Structure of French: Essays in Honour of T. B. W. Reid</i> . Oxford: Blackwell, 1972.
<i>Relire</i>	Dufournet, J., ed. <i>Relire le Roman d'Enéas</i> . Paris: Champion, 1985.
<i>Renaissance</i>	Benson, L. and G. Constable, eds. <i>Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century</i> . Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.
<i>Rethinking</i>	Brownlee, K. and S. Huot, eds. <i>Rethinking the "Roman de la Rose": Text, Image, Reception</i> . Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.
<i>Romance</i>	Brownlee, K. and M. Brownlee, eds. <i>Romance: Generic Transformations from Chrétien de Troyes to Cervantes</i> . Hanover, N.H.: University Presses of New England, 1985.
<i>Shifts</i>	Pratt, K., ed. <i>Shifts and Transpositions: A Festschrift for Elspeth Kennedy</i> . Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994.
<i>Sign</i>	Eco, U. and T. Sebeok, eds. <i>The Sign of Three: Dupin, Holmes, Peirce</i> . Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983.
<i>Solano</i>	Cormier, R. and U. T. Holmes, Jr., eds. <i>Essays in Honor of Louis Francis Solano</i> . Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976.

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<i>Sower</i>	Pickens, R. T., ed. <i>The Sower and his Seed: Essays on Chrétien de Troyes</i> . Lexington, Ky.: French Forum, 1983.
<i>Spiewok</i>	Buschinger, D., ed. <i>Europäische Literaturen im Mittelalter: Mélanges en l'honneur de Wolfgang Spiewok</i> . Griefswald: Reineke-Verlag, 1994.
<i>Spirit</i>	Burgess, G. and R. Taylor, eds. <i>The Spirit of the Court</i> . Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985.
<i>Spitzer</i>	<i>Studia philologica et litteraria in honorem Leo Spitzer</i> . Berne: Francke, 1958.
<i>Topsfield</i>	Noble, P. and L. Paterson, eds. <i>Chrétien de Troyes and the Troubadours: Essays in Memory of the Late Leslie Topsfield</i> . Cambridge: St Catharine's College, 1984.
<i>Le Temps</i>	<i>Le Temps et la durée dans la littérature au Moyen Age et à la Renaissance</i> . Paris: Nizet, 1986.
<i>Transtext</i>	Sturm-Maddox, S. and D. Maddox, eds. <i>Transtextualities: of Cycles and Cyclicity in Medieval French Literature</i> . Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995.
<i>Vergers</i>	<i>Vergers et jardins dans l'univers médiéval</i> . Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 1990.
<i>Voices</i>	Cormier, R. J., ed. <i>Voices of Conscience: Essays in Memory of James D. Powell and Rosemary Hodgins</i> . Philadelphia, Penn.: Temple University Press, 1976.
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<i>Woledge</i>	North, S., ed. <i>Studies in Medieval French Language and Literature Presented to Brian Woledge</i> . Geneva: Droz, 1988.
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Identity and encounter in medieval literature

A mute, inscrutable figure, seemingly unaware of where – or even of who – he is, moves through an alien, inhospitable terrain whose stylized features are uncannily familiar yet offer no clue as to the identity of either person or place. This enigmatic scene might occur in a *nouveau roman*; one thinks for example of the lone soldier wandering the streets of an unknown city in Robbe-Grillet's *Dans le labyrinthe*. But with only a few substitutions – of a sylvan wilderness for a cityscape, of a knight-errant for the urban itinerant – we find ourselves in the remote strangeness of medieval romance. Such commensurability of medieval and postmodern fictions is only temporary, however; for while the soldier will forever remain, both to himself and to the reader, unnamable and unknowable, the knight is undoubtedly on the verge of making a most extraordinary discovery concerning his own identity and the profound import of his errantry. Moreover, this will most likely stem from a dramatic encounter with the purveyor of an unanticipated disclosure. Sporadically, such moments occur elsewhere in world literature.¹ In medieval French narrative these “fictions of identity” are particularly numerous, however, and though the texts that incorporate them vary considerably in genre and subject matter, their salient characteristics are remarkably stable: typically the encounter befalls a prominent personage, like the knight-errant of the above example, who is confronted with matters of the utmost importance regarding his or her own self or situation, as these are reported back by an agency that we shall call the “informant,” whether this be another individual, a voice, or a representation. It is to this type of informative encounter, one of the most significant and consequential occurrences in a wide range of French narratives from

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the twelfth century through the later Middle Ages, that the present study is devoted.

An episode from a much later period will suggest both the longevity and the versatility of the type of encounter at issue. It occurs in a work from the apogee of French Realism, in a highly arresting setting that reflects the author's familiarity with a medieval legend as well as his reliance on nineteenth-century sources in which it had been adapted.² In Flaubert's "La Légende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier" as in countless medieval romances, the passage of a white animal signals the hero's call to high adventure. Instead of a swift and effulgent stag or boar, however, young Julian glimpses only a chalky little mouse, roaming carefree through the chapel of his father's feudal estate. This tiny creature nonetheless provides the requisite "call," activating an obsessive curiosity that soon lures the noble youth away from the orderly patrimonial world and into the savage, alien depths of a forest teeming with game. In terms of a psychic economy, the white mouse might be seen as a metaphor of the affective volcano awakening in Julian's unconscious. For the ludic little intruder scuttling across the altar represents precisely the kind of freedom from constraints thus far denied to this pious and prayerful lad whose existence has been overdetermined by the will of God, the weight of prophecy, and the law of the father. The mouse is the catalyst of an unexplained rage, triggering the metamorphosis of this exemplary "good little boy" – and future saint – into a monster. Not only does Julian hastily and violently dispatch the helpless creature, he plunges headlong into the wilderness and is soon deriving intense pleasure from the wholesale slaughter of the wildlife he finds during his aimless, manic wanderings. Eventually he unleashes his furious carnage upon a suckling fawn, a doe, and a gigantic stag, which, mortally wounded, utters a prophetic malediction: "Maudit! maudit! maudit! Un jour, coeur féroce, tu assassineras ton père et ta mère!" [Accursed, accursed, accursed! Someday, pitiless heart, you will kill your father and your mother!] After vehemently denying this dire prediction, Julian succumbs to anxious speculation about its plausibility: "Si je le voulais, pourtant?" [What if I wanted to, though?].

Outstanding among the reminiscences of the Middle Ages in Flaubert's account of the life of Saint Julian Hospitator is this stunning

rewriting of one important variety of encounter found in many medieval texts, in which a speaking animal conveys a message of vital significance to its recipient. Flaubert's unsettling adaptation hints darkly that the trio Julian accosts is a faunal metaphor of his own genesis and family.³ His deeply aggressive compulsions with respect to the latter, too abominable to find conscious expression, are projected outward, so that he perceives them as a message emanating, not from within his own disrupted psyche, but from an external source. The omniscient stag confronts Julian with the terrifying prospect of his eventual parricide, and as he begins to interact with this representation sponsored by his own unconscious, the hunter's mask falls away, laying bare the monstrous homicidal impulse he has long borne unwittingly within himself. At this crucial turning point in the story, Julian is utterly modified by the stag's prophecy, and despite his best efforts to forestall it, the narrative moves inexorably toward its gruesome fulfillment.

Encounters of this sort – let us call them *specular encounters* – always occur at a major intersection of selfhood with a crucial new perspective on its own identity. In medieval narratives we find them in an especially abundant array of settings: in all sorts of narratives, in verse and in prose, in brief as well as in longer works. Their prominence demonstrates that, in addition to providing straightforward narratives about remarkable figures, medieval storytellers tended to confront their protagonists with dramatic accounts or evocations of some part of their *own* story. Consistently located at a major turning point in the intrigue, such moments are never trivial, never mechanical or monotonously conventional. On the contrary, the specular encounter shows a virtually inexhaustible capacity for accommodating new material, and its occurrences are typically among the most unusual and salient passages in the entire work, and are memorable precisely by virtue of their uniqueness and arresting hermeneutic depth.

CONTEXTUALIZING THE ENCOUNTER: THE LIFE OF
SAINT EUSTACE

That the specular encounter has thus far escaped extensive treatment as a major component of literary discourse stems in large part from its

receptivity to the many different situations and types of content that provide it with ample camouflage.⁴ It requires a preliminary working conceptualization, and this we can establish through consideration of one medieval example, from a prose biography of Saint Eustace. Like the episode from Flaubert's *Trois contes*, this passage is comparable to an important segment in Marie de France's *Guigemar* which will receive extensive analysis in our first chapter: all three texts exemplify what could be termed a "cynegetic" subtype of the specular encounter, contextualized by the hunt and featuring the speaking prey as informant.

Our thirteenth-century prose *Vie de Saint Eustace* is among the earliest French versions of that hagiographic biography.⁵ It is extant in several manuscripts dating from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, and follows closely a tenth-century Latin life that harks back to an eighth-century Greek precursor.⁶ All of the versions tell of how Placidus, a virtuous commander in the legions of the Roman Emperor Trajan, is converted to Christianity while hunting, by a stag projecting an emblem of the Crucifixion between its antlers and speaking in the name of Christ.⁷ Renamed Eustace when baptized along with his wife and two sons, he endures many years of Job-like trials, including plague, theft, and dispersal of his family. After they are finally reunited in Rome, now under Hadrian, Christendom's foe, their steadfast faith and eventual martyrdom are valorized as a spiritual triumph.

The speaking stag appears to Placidus in two lengthy segments, one before and one after the family's baptism, and thus provides an excellent example of how the specular encounter may inform a larger textual environment.⁸ In this instance it achieves considerable amplitude, combining iconographically significant detail, quasi homiletic passages in direct discourse, and a number of distinct motifs relating to hunting, visions, and conversion. Inasmuch as the stag's dual manifestations provide the persuasive underpinnings of conversion, they constitute the fulcrum of the entire narrative. Three major functions are apparent: anticipation of future events; establishment of an eschatological temporal framework; and the introduction of interpretative cues through biblical allusion and iconography.

The prospective emphasis anticipates in detail the ensuing course of the narrative. The stag's initial injunction admonishes the hunter to

convert, receive baptism, and thus be symbolically reborn, while also bringing the salutary message to his family. Upon doing so, he discovers that his wife has experienced a similar vision, and the two virtually simultaneous encounters with the oracular Crucifix provide mutual corroboration of the “truth” of the manifestation that, in the wife’s words, confirms the presence of the true God, “verais Dex,” through the image of the true Cross, “veraie croiz.”⁹

At its second manifestation, the stag foretells the family’s suffering, martyrdom, and spiritual triumph. They have relinquished the devil’s cause, and he will subject them to severe tribulations (viii); having previously won wordly honor defending the emperor, Eustace is now to gird himself against the adversary of Christ, “Car il covient que tu soiez tentez ausi come fu Job e que tu veinques le deable par fine pacience” (ix) [For it is fitting that you be tempted like Job and that you defeat the devil through superior patience].¹⁰ Summoned to internalize this cosmic struggle, Eustace is left with no doubt as to its positive outcome, both in temporal terms – “te randrai ta premiere honor e ta premiere gloire” (ix) [I shall restore your original honor and glory] – and in terms of an ultimate spiritual victory (x).

The stag thus anticipates the principal narrative events that ensue – baptism, temptations, martyrdom – so that textual closure hinges on their fulfillment. In some types of narrative such an exhaustive prolepsis would diminish the potential interest of the story, but here it is greatly enhanced as part of a hagiographic account, one that was most likely disseminated in a homiletic tradition of cultic veneration.¹¹ As a rehearsal of archaic sacred verities, the story of Placidus’s specular encounter creates a paradigm of spiritual triumph over adversity, both political and diabolical, to be enacted in the balance of the narrative, thus constituting a venerable biography and formally commemorating divinely ordained events.¹²

A second major emphasis sets this episode into the eschatological temporality of universal history. The divine informant initially assumes the roles of both Father and Son:

Entent a moi, Placidus: je sui Jhesu Crist, qui de neient fis le ciel e la terre, e les quatre elemenz en quatre leus mis . . . Je sui cil qui forma home de terre. Je fui crucefiez e enseveliz e resuscitai au tierz jor de mort a vie. (iv)

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[Hear me, Placidus: I am Jesus Christ, who from nothing made heaven and earth and set the four elements into four places . . . It was I who formed man from earth. I was crucified, buried, and rose on the third day from death to life.]

This passage frames a temporal continuum extending from the Creation to the Resurrection, while also reflecting a Christian conceptualization widespread in medieval contexts, of the Redeemer of Mankind as Creator.¹³ Upon the stag's second visit, the divine voice speaks in the anagogical role of Christ enthroned on high, "empereres de pardurable empire" (ix) ["emperor of everlasting empire"], thus delimiting the temporality between the events related in the *vita* and the end of time. Together, the two segments encapsulate the initial, terminal, and centrally pivotal moments of universal history, thus coordinating this saintly biography with the collective history of salvation. While the saint's triumphant struggle against diabolically instigated temptations prefigures the ultimate defeat of evil at the end of time, the coming of Christ and the conversion of Placidus/Eustace are analogous: as the former marked the monumental crisis and reversal of values in universal history, so the latter replicates this transformation on the microcosmic scale of a single exemplary life.¹⁴

A third, iconic emphasis offers a rich combination of scriptural and figural components. While the later postconversion tribulations of Eustace are compared with those of Job (xv), Placidus's first confrontation by the stag evokes biblical precedents. Unlike the Roman centurion Cornelius, who was converted "par autrui" [by another], that is, by the persuasive rhetoric of Saint Peter (see Acts 10), Placidus is to be converted, like Saint Paul, by a *demonstration* (10), a direct divine manifestation. In addition, the story of Balaam (see Num. 22:2) evoked by the narrator involves an instance of conversion effected by a speaking animal:

et tot ausi com il fist l'asnesse parler desoz Balan e reprendre le vassal
de sa musardie, tot autressi mostra il a cestui entre les cornes del cerf
le signe de la veraie croiz, . . . e en mi leu des cornes l'image Nostre
Seignor Jhesu Crist, qui fist le cerf parler en guise d'ome et apela
Placidain. (III)

[and just as he made the ass Balaam was riding speak and rescue the
vassal from his error, in the same way he showed this man the sign of

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the true Cross between the stag's horns, . . . and in the midst of the horns the image of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who made the stag to speak like a human being and summoned Placidus.]

While the story of Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9) introduces the sense of a sudden and overwhelming visionary moment occasioning a quantum change of identity, hence an instructive juxtaposition of two ethically and temporally opposed views of the same self (Saul:Paul :: Placidus:Eustace), the story of Balaam's ass combines a divine manifestation with an instance of conversion as a rhetorical process of persuasion by an animal. The example of Peter's conversion of Cornelius by persuasive means is supplanted by the more pertinent example of Balaam's conversion by a supernaturally endowed beast mediating nature and culture. The primary emphasis is nonetheless on the cruciform icon: "e por ce ving ge en terre le monde sauver en tel *semblance* come tu puez voir" (III) [and therefore I came to earth to redeem the world in this *semblance*, as you can see]. The eighth-century origins of the legend of Eustace may in fact reflect opposition to the iconoclasts' rejection of religious images.¹⁵ This emphasis persists in our Old French version where, in quasi-exegetical fashion, the stag glosses the icon's historical significance and contrasts its efficacy as a Christian vision with futile pagan idols, the "ydres" venerated in Placidus's imperial milieu (III).

This episode's fundamental specularity is further emphasized by a paradoxical cynegetic metaphor which transforms the supernatural Other into the hunter's double, as Placidus is compelled to exchange roles with his prey: "Mes cil qui a tot le sens e tot le savoir par sa douçour e par sa misericorde porça e chaça celui qui le cerf chaçoit et bersa celui qui le cerf voloit berser . . ." (III) [But he who holds all wisdom and knowledge, with his gentleness and mercy, pursued and hunted the one who was hunting the stag and wounded the one who sought to wound the stag]. The hunter is forced to accept the role of the prey, which in turn becomes both the "Pursuer" and the informant purveying the reflexive message.¹⁶ Yet this divine utterance offers no conventional homily to the unredeemed on the merits of Christianity. Designed to startle and disarm precisely this particular hunter, the blunt pronouncement asserts that his cynegetic enterprise must now fail: "Tu bees a la prise del cerf e je bé a fere de toi ma proie: tu ne lieras

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ne ne prendras le cerf, mes je t'en menrai pris e lié . . .” (III) [You strive to take the stag and I strive to make you my prey; you shall neither seize nor bind the stag, but I shall bear you away, seized and bound]. The figure of the hunter as prey of his quarry appears elsewhere in medieval literature, especially in courtly contexts as part of a repertoire of amatory metaphors.¹⁷ By contrast, at this moment of hagiographic self-recognition, the specular encounter effects the hero's specular captivity in a vision of the future, comprised of exemplary tribulation, martyrdom, and Christian transcendence.¹⁸ Placidus discovers his own image reflected back to him, not as a mundane replica of the self he is about to relinquish, but rather as the nascent spiritual self revealed to him in the discourse of the Hunter who will effect his conversion from vengery to veneration.

MOTIF AND SCHEMA

The establishment of a working conceptualization of the specular encounter is complicated by its variable dimensionality. In the abstract one might think of it as a minimal element, an “encounter,” though in context – as in the *Vie de Saint Eustace* – it normally comprises a sizable segment, and in some instances may run through one or more episodes. The rich array of motifs in the example of *Eustace* might suggest that we attempt to characterize it in terms of its constituent motifs. And certainly motifs having to do with the communication of knowledge and information are pertinent to the specular encounter, some instances of which could be described, albeit imprecisely, in terms of indexed motifs.¹⁹ Entire texts have in fact been subjected to scrutiny along such lines, though not without encountering major problems. Take the example of the *Lais* of Marie de France, in which motifs classified by Stith Thompson have been positioned, rather like beads on a string, along the chronological axis of each *lai*.²⁰ Among the indexed items listed for the *lai* of *Guigemar*, for example, motifs such as “Speaking stag” and “Curse by wounded animal” are indeed evocative of one major segment of specular encounter in this *lai*,²¹ but the coherence of the passage all but disappears amid a random and laconic accumulation of heterogeneous motifs assembled from the index; they function on different levels and create an ensemble whose interrelationships are far

from clear.²² The taxonomic perception of content fostered by this method also increases the risk of identifying the specular encounter with the content of only one textual exemplar, or at best with only a few. For example, Stith Thompson's motif P401 – "Son insists on following father's trade. This has been kept secret at request of dying father who was unsuccessful. Son learns from mother" – does bring to mind important features of the specular encounter in Marie's *Yonec* and the anonymous *lai* of *Tydorel*, but the circumstances it addresses are too specific, involving only cases where a mother reveals paternal identity to a son, thus excluding countless other situations featuring self-discovery in the discourse of an informant.

For a variety of reasons, then, the kind of inductive approach offered by motif study, while sometimes useful in locating recurrent elements within a large corpus of texts, is often unsatisfactory for more specialized types of study, and it is evident that compilations of motifs leave much to be desired as authoritative criteria for extensive textual analysis or nuanced historical study of traditions.²³ In the case of the specular encounter, the most significant disadvantage of motif study is that it precludes formal definition of a motif as a complex entity while fostering its reconstitution piecemeal, as a primitive mosaic of discrete, independent elements, ultimately affording a perception of the specular encounter as a conglomerate of heterogeneous elements.²⁴ This suggests that we need instead to conceptualize it as a *functional nexus* of properties that combine into an articulated whole, or *schema*.

The schematic perspective offers an important advantage over analysis based on motifs in that the basic features are functionally interrelated elements. While motifs provide rudimentary identification of the raw substance of content, the schema is an integrated *form* capable of accommodating many types of content.²⁵ Paul Zumthor puts it this way: "une oeuvre narrative donnée . . . procède d'un ou quelques *schémas fondamentaux* qui, quelle que soit leur origine lointaine, apparaissent, au niveau littéraire, réductibles à un ensemble à peu près fixe de traits, dont l'agencement reste en général conforme aux recettes transmises par les rhétoriciens sous le nom de *descriptio* ou comme énumération de *circumstantiae*."²⁶ While each occurrence of a given schema organizes a complex of fundamental traits,²⁷ it may also accommodate a number of variables, including motifs.²⁸ Zumthor

further maintains that certain “schémas fondamentaux,” especially remarkable for “leur très grande aptitude à s’intégrer à toute espèce d’œuvres et à s’y charger des significations les plus diverses,” achieve special prominence during a given historical period or become an essential part of a tradition. The study of such schematic “types,” he proposes, is of the utmost importance: “L’histoire des littératures médiévales a le plus grand intérêt à ‘isoler’ les types, autant que faire se peut, et à en définir les aspects, car ils constituent techniquement le facteur principal de l’art de ce temps.”²⁹ Analysis of schemata and their various usages can indeed enhance our understanding of a specific work in relation to others, as well as afford important insights into how traditions are modified over time to achieve new objectives, as Jane Taylor has recently shown.³⁰

Although the specular encounter will be identified in this study in the broad conceptual terms of a “schema” comprised of interrelated properties, including motifs, it is important that we specify more precisely what is meant here by that term. Zumthor’s designation of fundamental schemata “quelle que soit leur origine lointaine” insufficiently emphasizes a capital distinction between a schema and the traditions represented by its various occurrences. As a formal schematic configuration, the specular encounter is not identifiable with any single “tradition,” nor do its occurrences comprise a “tradition” in its own right. This is because a schema is a formal *vehicle* capable of accommodating different types of traditional material, as we see in the two examples discussed above: whereas in the life of Eustace the speaking animal is explicitly related to an analogue in the Old Testament book of Numbers, in Flaubert’s tale of Julian it already figures in a specific medieval hagiographic source. Moreover, in contrast with both of these cases, we shall see that in our third example, from Marie de France’s *Guigemar*, the speaking animal recalls a traditional background in folklore. In each of these instances of the schema the informant is an animal, yet each reflects a different set of traditions.

The diachronic study of sources, traditions, and their transmission is neither an uncommon nor an unjustifiable enterprise.³¹ Our primary objective here, however, is not to document the traditional ancestry of the various sources reflected by any given instance of the schema, but rather to assess these occurrences in terms of their contextual coherence.

The primary emphasis throughout will thus remain on the schema as a *content-form*, one that provides a nexus for the organization of many different types of content in diverse textual environments.³² Our main concern will be with what an instance of specular encounter might reveal about the literary and historical factors lying within the medieval time-frame of a given work's production. Study of the schema's contextual variance will, in the concluding chapter, yield important insights with regard to poetic, literary-historical, and cultural considerations. In the meantime, we can launch our inquiry with a preliminary description of some of the specular schema's most salient properties.

BASIC FEATURES OF THE SPECULAR ENCOUNTER

Diverse in origin as well as genre, the texts in our sampling all feature at at least one locus in which action becomes contingent upon a primary personage's receipt of crucial information pertaining to the self and various aspects of its identity. The addressee of a specular disclosure, who may be a *narratee* when a story is related by the informant,³³ has in most instances been unaware of the degree and gravity of his or her prior ignorance. Indeed, such figures are sometimes profound enigmas unto themselves, and their subsequent development is often a direct result of the subjective liquidation of this monumental cognitive deficit.

For Julian and Placidus the informant is an interlocutor, though in some instances a document, an inscription, or an iconic representation of the message may fulfill the informative function. Whatever the communicative medium, the signifying "other" confronts the "self" with new or unfamiliar knowledge. In both of our examples, the dazzling manifestation of the informant orientates the witness of the spectacle, the hunter, away from the phenomenal world and toward the inner sphere of subjectivity. This localized cognitive transfer creates an intersubjective enclave, in which the informant places the addressee before a *speculum* that mirrors its discovery of a modified self-image. In some instances, the altered self-perception occurs against an unfamiliar background which, as in these two examples, the self-perceiver may initially find alien or bizarre.

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This recontextualization of self-perception normally propels the self into a transitional phase while also reviving narrative momentum. The stag's utterance makes Julian aware of the parricidal wish, thus ending his alienation in a frenzied, manic state while also plunging him into a phase of depressive convalescence; its analogue in the life of Eustace prefaces a long series of tribulations. Fundamentally a transitional component, the specular encounter very rarely occupies the initial or the terminal segment of a narrative; it is typically the crucial fulcrum mediating two self-images and thus also two series of episodes, thereby effecting a major shift away from the inchoative end of the narrative spectrum and toward its ultimate synthesis.³⁴

In addition to offering insight on processes of communication and their representation, our examples also address cognitive and epistemological issues. Moreover, in most instances where a speaking informant rather than a written or figural representation is involved, direct discourse endows the specular transaction with intense rhetorical development.³⁵ The informant's discourse is characteristically predicated on an argument that envisages the eventual attribution of a sanction or judgment.³⁶ Accordingly, it will likely feature common oratorical devices for analysis, deliberation, persuasion, and judgment detailed in rhetorical treatises, and, like other conventional types of direct address found in medieval narratives, such as exhortations to battle, baronial or clerical counsels, encomia, eulogies, and so on, it may rely on a limited number of recurrent motifs.³⁷ Among the most common are apostrophe; evaluation of the present situation; evocation of a misfortune; allusion to the past; anticipation of the future; admonition to act. The discourse of the informant, who tends to assume the role of analyst with regard to the main narrative, also lends itself to further characterization according to illocutionary categories, or speech acts, such as naming, constating, disclosure, and exhortation.³⁸ In short, the informant typically issues a threefold mandate to the addressee: to discover, to believe, and thus to behave, commensurate with a specific disclosure.

The introduction of a specular encounter into a narrative may in fact significantly alter the way it is perceived, if not its fundamental character. Heightened thereby is the sense that knowledge about, and valorization of, circumstances and events may be as important, or even

more so, than their straightforward depiction. The functions of narrator, implied author and listener/reader are embedded within the story, as “telling” yields to the “showing-of-telling”: the enunciatory contract between narrator and reader, in some cases rendered explicit by conventional utterances like “Oyez, seigneurs!” or “Or veïssiez mult fier estor,” is overshadowed by exchanges in direct discourse *within* the fiction, between the informant and the addressee. Hence a major change of emphasis, from the sequence of events in the unfolding story itself to a character’s reception of details of his or her own story, which now assume paramount importance. In terms of narrative economy, such a displacement may entail a certain informational excess: the embedded story is often already known or at least anticipated by the reader, so that the cognitive benefit of the encounter accrues exclusively to the specific addressee of the specular message.

It would appear that the specular encounter’s tendency to evoke or summarize previously recounted segments of the narrative was perceived by medieval writers, not as superfluous redundancy, but rather as a positive adjunct because of its vital role in reanimating the story by illuminating one of its principal actors. Two successive movements are involved: the informant’s appeal, in other words a “modalizing” function or catalyst, and the addressee’s response, an “actualizing” function conditioned by the transition from one subjective state to another on the part of the addressee.³⁹

Occasionally, the exchanges in direct discourse are followed by responsive, meditative monologues on the part of the newly enlightened addressee, suggestive of an underlying concern with the modes by which knowledge is acquired, as well as with the impact of its acquisition on subjective states. The status and quality of the knowledge imparted is also a matter of concern: while some occurrences augment both the amount of information imparted and the degree of certainty with regard thereto, in others the intersubjective exchange involves considerable tension or play with the factor of reliability.⁴⁰

Dramatization in midcareer of the moment at which self-knowledge is finally acquired thus diminishes our sense that it is a quality immanent within the self, suggesting instead a conviction on the part of many medieval authors that neither actions nor subsequent meditation on them will alone suffice for the construction of a satisfactory

character. Although deeds and intuitions may be consequential to the maturation of selfhood, it is implied that the essential criterion must be, rather, the acquisition of self-knowledge emanating from an external source. Indeed, one of the schema's most important implications is that the protagonists of these narratives are not born fully adequate to the challenges that will confront them, but that instead they must somehow be *remade* "in medias res," reconstituted discursively from outside of, and often in spite of, themselves.

Hence an apparent concern on the part of narrative poets with the creation of "developmental characters" by means of intersubjective communication. This also implies that their publics were receptive to much more than an eventful tale: on occasion one has the sense that between the specular enlightenment of characters and the audiences that enjoyed such arresting moments there might also have existed a virtually specular relationship. In this regard, Flaubert's tale and the life of Eustace offer particularly useful examples for consideration at the outset of our study, for despite their circumstantial similarities, each illustrates a different kind of *speculum*. While in both cases the informant is a speaking animal, Eustace encounters a modified, prospective image of himself in the discourse of a radically transcendent Other, whereas the "other" Julian encounters is projected outward from a previously unknown sphere of his own selfhood. This contrast suggests that the originary ethos of the specular message may vary considerably, and that we should be attentive to such variance as we make our way through the corpus. It also raises the question of what heuristic value the varieties of *speculum* we discover might have had within the *cultural* contexts of reception, a matter to which we shall return in the final chapter.

THE QUESTION OF REFLEXIVITY

The term "specular" requires special consideration, as it raises the issue of reflexivity in literary texts. In terms of the poetics of narrative, questions pertaining to the "reflexive" or "specular" qualities of literary discourse draw attention to how texts internally replicate or even reduplicate their own language, figures, themes, or structures; and to the extent that the "specular encounter" becomes a site at which the text

rehearses variants of its own properties or the concepts and ideas that it explicitly or implicitly sponsors, it invites consideration as a major reflexive component of narrative.

In a study of specular techniques in fiction, Lucien Dällenbach has shown how reflexive discourse may occur according to a widely varied typology, from the kind of *mise en abyme* that “internally reflects the totality of the story by singulative, iterative, or specious reduplication,” to various types of specularity in which only partial reduplication or replication is involved.⁴¹ Dällenbach has demonstrated how the French New Novel in particular is a veritable laboratory of reflexive properties that may exist on several levels of textual organization.⁴² Most critical work on reflexivity has nonetheless dealt, as does Dällenbach, with modern texts, which might lead one to suppose that study of reflexive elements in medieval literature would offer an unpromising line of inquiry. In fact, when reflexivity first came under intense critical and theoretical scrutiny two decades ago, medieval texts were initially on the margins of the debate. In one early discussion, the reflexive qualities of Calogrenant’s tale in Chrétien’s *Yvain, ou le chevalier au lion*⁴³ were perceived as exceptional among twelfth-century works.⁴⁴

Calogrenant’s story is remarkable for its reflexive density; it is an analepsis recounting his abortive visit to the perilous fountain, while as the model of his cousin Yvain’s subsequent visits to the fountain it is a prolepsis as well.⁴⁵ But it is by no means an anomaly in this period. Reflexive first-person accounts are numerous in twelfth-century works. For example, they proliferate in the “Joie de la cour” episode of Chrétien’s *Erec et Enide*. In another work attributed to Chrétien, the eponymous Guillaume d’Angleterre enumerates the long string of misfortunes that have befallen him since his family was dispersed, thus summarizing at length earlier episodes already familiar to the reader; this story leads to his being recognized and reunited with his two long-lost sons.⁴⁶ In some late eleventh-century manuscripts of the *Vie de Saint Alexis*, Alexis bequeaths to posterity his written autobiography – which is in effect a digest of the narrative we have been reading – and the contents of this document are eventually made public after his death.⁴⁷ Like Calogrenant’s story, these accounts are all analepses evoking earlier portions of the work or else of circumstances antecedent to events depicted in it.⁴⁸ Their function is essentially cognitive; they

bring a new and vital awareness to certain characters, thus effecting a crucial link between the past dimension of the narrated story, or diegesis, and the present moment in the story, thus renewing the narrative's momentum. As for prospective accounts – prolepses – one thinks of the episode of the “cimetière futur” in Chrétien's *Chevalier de la charrete* (1829–2010), or of the fool's prophecy in his *Conte du graal* (1059–62); such passages effectively identify crucial heroic functions that will be fulfilled in subsequent episodes.⁴⁹

More recently, a number of studies have discussed reflexive features in a considerable variety of works. Although a few have been broadly based,⁵⁰ most are limited in scope, dealing with one or at most a handful of texts that display reflexive properties at one or more levels of textual organization. For example, some have identified as instances of *mise en abyme* passages that offer localized replications of a host text either in part or in its entirety.⁵¹ Others have shown that the comprehensive organization of texts may also be reflexive – for example, that the two parts of *Le Bel Inconnu* together comprise a chiasmic format – or that specular relations may obtain between large segments of a text.⁵² Within a single work, thematic and descriptive specularity may also link aspects of a character's inner subjective world and the external environment; or to achieve special effects, sometimes involving marvels or enchantments, specularity may significantly relate different topographical, geographical, or temporal dimensions depicted in the work.⁵³ In a narrative containing a frame whose premise is the narration of multiple tales, moreover, the frame may relate reflexively to one or more of the stories.⁵⁴ In addition to these and other *intratextual* mirrorings, the *intertextual* reflexivity between a text and an earlier precursor may be crucial. For example, Jean-Charles Huchet, characterizing the *Roman d'Enéas* as a “roman spéculaire,” explores the specular relationship between this Old French “re-writing” and its Virgilian model. He proposes that the work “emblemizes” its own specularity in the mirror atop the tomb of Camille, and that numerous other reflexive resemblances among characters, details, and episodes provide the fiction with internal cross-references to its own themes and signifying processes while reflexively dramatizing, on an intertextual scale, a poetics of rewriting.⁵⁵

Among Old French narratives the *Roman de la rose* is especially rich

in reflexive qualities, as the modern critical reception of this work amply attests. Indeed, the criticism on this aspect of the *Rose* brings into prominence virtually all of the most important issues involved. One of the most frequently discussed passages in this regard is Guillaume de Lorris's depiction of the Fountain of Narcissus, which has received a great deal of attention from critics who, in analyzing the fountain's specularization of the dreamer's image against the florid background of the garden, arrive at widely divergent assessments of the significance of the passage, both intrinsically and with respect to the entire work.⁵⁶ Jean de Meun's continuation has also enjoyed considerable scrutiny for its reflexivity, prompted in part by Nature's discourse on optics and by Jean's suggestive qualification of the *Rose* as a "Miroër aus Amoreus" (10621).⁵⁷ With respect to the global coherence of the entire work, critics have discussed the reflexive relations, both explicit and implicit, that obtain in poetically and morally significant contrasts between the two parts of the poem.⁵⁸ Jean's treatment of Pygmalion's story has in particular been examined in depth for the way it reflects multiple aspects of the work as a whole,⁵⁹ while, quite recently, a major synthesis on Jean's portion of the *Rose* offers a wealth of important perspectives on its extremely dense reflexivity in terms of poetics, allegory, moral import, and reception.⁶⁰

These recent appraisals that touch on a wide range of reflexive features in major Old French narratives are indicative that the poetic practices of writers trained in the arts of the *trivium* could extend to exploitation of the reflexive potential of texts and cover a broad and nuanced spectrum of types, involving miniaturized replication, analogy, identical repetition, and so on – all features that are potentially operative within different genres and at various levels of literary discourse.

Where, then, does the specular encounter fit into this picture? We shall see that in many different medieval narrative contexts the representation of the specular encounter affords highly developed examples of the kind of textual production grounded in the arts of the *trivium*, with particular prominence being given to rewriting.⁶¹ We shall find much evidence of *internal* rewriting – a kind of *intratextual* translatio – whereby properties of the larger text are rewritten on a small scale in passages that are modified in meaningful ways, so as, for example, to

effect a particular ethical valorization, denote a judgment, or achieve an ironic perspective on some aspect of the larger narrative. Our examples will show that the specular disclosure may reflect the main story, or diegesis, or involve a heterodiegetic dimension not previously recounted. We shall see that reflexive relations may exist between the informant's disclosure and these dimensions, as well as between the discovering self and the self-image discovered, as described or implied in the informant's message. The latter may be comprised of analeptic or proleptic elements, or of a combination thereof, for example referring backward to the addressee's childhood or genealogy or forward to his or her future situation. The segment depicting the encounter may also acquire stylistic and thematic affinities with other areas of the text, such as through negative appraisal of a character's past that results in defamiliarization, for both character and reader, of the diegetic background, or through corrective projection of a virtual self, thus lending prospective shape and significance to a previously unforeseen future.

When rewriting is carried to extremes of virtuosity, as in the poems of the *Folie Tristan*, which incorporate miniaturized reflections of vast segments of the *Roman de Tristan*, we shall see how deftly the schema can be used as a site for the cultivation of *intertextual* reflexivities. It is particularly in evidence in specular encounters that contain an allusion to, or a résumé of, a narrative whose source is independent of the host text, as in the stag's abbreviated recapitulation of the Creation in the life of Eustace or – an example of figural specularity – the pictorial evocation of the *Remedia Amoris* in Marie de France's *Guigemar*. The *Queste del saint graal*, discussed in Chapter Two, affords many examples of such narrative “annexing,” where hermits in the role of informants relate or evoke edifying tales and examples from biblical, apocryphal, and legendary sources in order to heighten the allegorical significance of chivalric adventures. This kind of localized augmentation of a primary narrative through the telling of secondary narratives will be found to be especially effective for the maintenance of cyclical coherence, as in the Prose *Merlin*, when Arthur hears Merlin explain the relationship between the Round Table, the Grail Table, and the table of the Last Supper.⁶² Inasmuch as they partake of the same interpolative esthetic apparent in the familiar practice of “lyric insertion” in narrative, such passages could be identified as instances of “narrative insertion.”

The following chapters will thus demonstrate that the reflexivity generated by the specular encounter, which owes much of its vitality to its versatility as a privileged locus of highly consequential disclosures, is in essence “prismatic,” adaptable to the service of many different ends, all of which are in one way or another extensively integrated into the work as a whole. Moreover, in addition to the myriad reflexive relations that may obtain within that textual universe, it will be apparent that the specular encounter may sometimes develop reflexive relations with the enunciatory pact between narrator and reader/listener, as well as with the ideological horizon of reception and a wide variety of cultural contexts. Although the majority of studies of medieval literary reflexivity have focused primarily on the linguistic, stylistic, and thematic elements that lie within what are often assumed to be the finite boundaries of a given work,⁶³ our examples of the schema will also suggest ways in which, beyond that text-intrinsic dimension, reflexive relations may obtain between instances of the schema and aspects of literary production and reception that flow into a much larger dimension of cultural concerns.⁶⁴

We cannot, of course, naively anticipate that the schema’s reflexivity characteristically offers direct, unproblematic access to cultural dimensions – nor that medieval literary texts afford faithful and reliable “mirrors” of “medieval man” in a “medieval world,” what Mary Speer has referred to as “the specular fallacy of reading romances for information on medieval life.”⁶⁵ Nor will our findings with regard to the types of reflexivity represented by the schema lend support to monolithic views of medieval literary texts as “figural” specularizations of a transcendently grounded “world view” dominant during “the Middle Ages” in general.⁶⁶ Cautioning against a narrow definition of reflexivity according to either a “mimetic or representational” or a “transcendental” bias, Robert Siegle has argued that “reflexivity derives its authority not from the ‘reality’ it imitates, but from the cultural conventions that define both narrative and the construct we call ‘reality’. The poetics of both are constitutive.”⁶⁷ Instead of offering an unmodified replica of an extratextual coherence, reflexivity in the specular encounter constructs relations with the inward dynamic of textuality *and* with cultural concerns whose nature varies according to the schema’s principal functions. Thus, while examining the textual and

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discursive strategies by which the schema reconstitutes the subject, we must also consider how intra- and intertextual types of reflexivity may in turn entertain reflexive relations with a much larger, culturally diverse universe that includes the spheres of the text's production, its reception, and the ideological horizon relating them.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Our principal objective is to assess in a wide range of medieval "fictions of identity" – texts that at some critical juncture(s) accord particular emphasis to matters of identity – the scope and significance of the specular encounter. The inquiry will lead us into two distinct yet interrelated areas of investigation. The first, attuned to modes of medieval literary production, concerns the schema's textual properties, with emphasis on its nature as a discursive phenomenon, as it accommodates reorientations of selfhood and the sense of its own identity, as effected by the discourse or the representation of an "other." We shall be particularly concerned with ways in which segments depicting specular encounter are integrated into the comprehensive text. The second, larger issue concerns reasons why the specular encounter figures so prominently in these medieval French narratives. In this large assortment of works from the twelfth century through the later Middle Ages, what factors might explain the schema's unusual frequency, its conservative formal variability according to a limited array of functions, and the remarkable amplitude of its many implementations?

Mindful of the hypothetical model sketched out above, we shall, in the ensuing chapters, work through a varied ensemble of texts featuring the specular encounter. The objective is not to compile a virtually exhaustive inventory of occurrences – an effort that, even if feasible, would yield only disappointing, primarily quantitative results. Because this schema is not restricted to a small and generically homogeneous group of works that appeared within a narrowly circumscribed time frame, we *must* examine a substantial and varied assortment of narratives, notably from the vast domain of vernacular romance and related types of brief narrative in which the specular encounter is most frequently in evidence. This is not a tacit affirmation that the schema does not appear in other medieval narrative genres or in genres like

drama that embody a fundamental narrative dimension. The first two examples of specular encounter featured in this Introduction are indicative of its importance to hagiographic accounts, and elsewhere in this study, particularly in the Afterword, examples from the *chansons de geste* and medieval drama will be cited or evoked. Many of our examples are taken from romances, *lais*, and related genres, where they are more numerous and used in more systematic ways, both in exemplars of verse romance and in prose works. Yet the schema also comes to prominence in epic, drama, fabliau, and didactic narratives. Despite the necessarily selective nature of our coverage, the following chapters are sufficiently representative of the various types of specular encounter to include those types that are also found in other narrative genres.⁶⁸ One anticipates – in fact *assumes* – that readers familiar with medieval literature and indeed with the literatures of other periods and societies, will be reminded of pertinent examples in works not addressed in this study, and that others may be prompted to entertain the concept of “specular encounter” in relation to other texts and other periods, thus continuing what can only be an initial exploration within the necessarily limited confines of our investigation here.

As regards chronology, our textual samplings have been chosen so as to sound a relatively extensive time-frame, from the early twelfth century to the end of the fourteenth. It would obviously be impossible to account for the schema's fortunes in terms of any strict continuity or causality during such a relatively *longue durée*. This temporal context was determined in part by a concern with choosing a textual ensemble that would be representative of the schema's principal functions in medieval French narratives. Extensive though it may be, however, this rather lengthy segment of the Middle Ages is not altogether devoid of significance as a coherent span of time, for this was a period of intense literary production in French, one that saw the inception of textual practice in all of the major, and most of the minor, genres, as well as the vigorous proliferation and maturation of many types of vernacular narrative, initially in verse and subsequently, from the early thirteenth century, in prose. Each of our examples incorporates the specular encounter in ways that are unique in terms of content. Considered together, they represent a wide range of concerns, poetic as well as cultural, one of sufficient breadth to allow us to observe the schema in

different textual environments representing a variety of *materia*, generic types, narrative strategies, contexts of reception, and ideological horizons.

Each chapter addresses different aspects of the question, beginning with two extensive investigations of the schema's consistent development throughout a corpus of works by a single author. Chapter One shows how, in the twelve *Lais* of Marie de France, the specular encounter assumes the principal accessory role in bringing about a highly characteristic closing configuration in each *lai*. The comparative dimension created by Marie's *Guigemar* and our earlier discussion of the life of Saint Eustace initially provides an opportunity to consider the characteristics of the specular encounter in related hagiographic and courtly settings of the cynegetic subtype; subsequently the chapter deals with each *lai* in Marie's collection in turn as a "fiction of reciprocity," in which the specular encounter is instrumental in the establishment of a reciprocal relationship toward which the story develops and which it valorizes in a special way at the story's close.

Chapter Two, devoted to the specular encounter in Arthurian romance, takes up first the five romances of Chrétien de Troyes. In general, these fictions incorporate the specular encounter into segments devoted to the major crises, where they function as critical points of transition between two sections that constitute a global bipartition of each romance into what is termed here a "textuality of crisis." The chapter then traces the schema's fortunes in later Arthurian works, including *Le Bel Inconnu*, which displays close affinities with Chrétien's romances in its prominent incorporation of the schema, and the Prose *Lancelot*, which features it repeatedly as an important adjunct of Lancelot's biography and the work's cyclical coherence.

In Chapter Three, on the tryst in courtly fictions, we shall see how the specular encounter provides a locus for the analysis, primarily in passages of direct discourse, of circumstantial evidence brought to light in the tryst's "aftermath"; in this role the schema acquires a new, often ludic emphasis on transgressive reflexivity resulting from interpretive misapprehensions that complicate the informant-addressee relationship and in so doing renew the resources and hermeneutic interest of the fiction. Chapter Four, devoted to the specular encounter as a vehicle of information pertaining to identity and lineage, offers extended

analyses of two works that illustrate its synthesizing capacities in this role: *La Fille du comte de Pontieu* and the *Roman de Mélusine* by Jean d'Arras. We shall also consider ways in which many other works foreground issues of identity by implementing the schema, whose specialized profile in service to identitary concerns will allow us to entertain the notion of medieval family romance.

Hence, in sum, a broadly based inquiry. Having in this Introduction established a working notion of the specular encounter as a schema comprised of a basic set of interrelated properties, this conceptualization can now serve as the basis of a synthesis that will be elaborated progressively, over the course of the ensuing chapters. In these complementary investigations, each of the specular encounter's principal functions in our corpus of narratives will be identified and its poetic and cultural implications will be weighed in terms of their larger significance as accessories to a variety of specialized concerns within different spheres of medieval culture. Together, the following chapters will examine the poetic means as well as the cultural ends of the schema's prominence and suggest multiple responses to questions of both the "hows" and the "whys" of specular encounters in medieval French narrative.

The specular encounter in fictions of reciprocity: the *Lais* of Marie de France

After more than eight centuries, the *Lais* of Marie de France still occupy scholars and enjoy a sizable reading public. Their longevity no doubt stems in large part from Marie's acute sensitivity to the dynamic of desire that lends shape, substance, and a degree of closure to each *lai*, yet also from a certain enigmatic quality that prevails throughout, awakening intense readerly curiosity without ever fully satisfying it. Also apparent is another predominant characteristic, thus far unexamined, one that fosters both the overall coherence of each *lai*, as well as a unique blend of limpidity and inscrutability characteristic of the collection as a whole: the privileged moments of specular encounter that bring sudden illumination concerning the self. We find at least one occurrence in each of the twelve *lais* attributed to Marie's authorship.

In this chapter, we shall see that, as it is consistently implemented in the *Lais*, the specular encounter ensures their perception as homogeneous tales that cohere as a collection. The *Lais* have received critical attention from two distinct perspectives. A majority of scholars have examined them individually or in subsets, and this substantial body of scholarship is laced with many rich veins.¹ Indeed, the abundance of commentary and the diversity of interpretive positions with regard to any given text attest to the kind of active, hermeneutically constructive reception envisaged in the general prologue as constitutive of the perdurable longevity of the *Lais* among successive generations of readers.² On the other hand, a few scholars have – often only in passing – entertained the possibility that the *Lais* may in some important way cohere as an ensemble.³ This line of inquiry is readily prompted by dozens of resonances that echo throughout the collection and create that uncanny effect of thematic marbling so immediately seductive to

most readers.⁴ More importantly, the general prologue offers a powerful hint that an architectural principle did indeed govern their construction: the authorial voice affirms that “M’entremis des *lais assembler*” (47) [I undertook to *assemble* the *lais*].⁵ Some scholars have wondered if this suggestive exordial glimpse of a specific process of authorial “assemblage,” or amalgamation, might allow us to assume that the Harley manuscript containing the general prologue and the twelve known *lais* attributed to Marie’s authorship is the product of some profoundly meaningful comprehensive design.⁶

In this chapter we entertain that possibility in terms of the specular encounter and its narrative contextualization, both in each *lai* individually and within the collection as a whole. It will be apparent that, in every one of these poems, the specular encounter provides the crucial locus of transition essential to the story’s resolution. More specifically, we shall see how this schema is consistently the vital accessory to establishment of a relation of *reciprocity* that is variously thematized at the close of each poem. A second type of analysis will show how the schema is operative throughout the collection in complementarity with one fundamental variety of narrative that acquired considerable prominence during the later twelfth century, Marie de France being one of its most systematic early practitioners. Our objective is to bring to light the highly normative properties of the *lai* as it is so uniquely conceptualized in this collection, in order to show that the *Lais*, by virtue of the way in which each text displays the same complementary principles of narrative and discursive organization, comprise an organized ensemble, one that was among the earliest – if not the earliest – transtextually unified *recueils* of vernacular brief narratives in medieval literature.

THE SPECULAR ENCOUNTER IN *GUIGEMAR*

Let us begin with *Guigemar*, the first of the *lais* in Harley 978, which alone among extant manuscripts contains the general prologue and all twelve *lais* usually attributed to Marie de France.⁷ The way in which the specular encounter functions in this initial *lai* is programmatic, anticipating quite precisely the highly specialized development our schema receives throughout the balance of the collection.

Its first occurrence, near the beginning of the *lai*, is Guigemar’s

dramatic confrontation by the speaking hind, a segment that has counterparts in medieval hagiography, among them the episode from the life of Eustace discussed in the Introduction.⁸ As in the latter biography, this moment brings about a quantum change in the hero's convictions and orientation; in both texts the specular schema marks the principal turning point of the biography. Important contrasts do set the two passages apart: in *Guigemar* the creature's message is devoid of religious doctrine; it lacks the quasi-allegorical quality of its counterpart in *Eustace*; and the enigmatic animal never clarifies its nature or provenance. The schema's initial occurrence in *Guigemar* nonetheless functions as it does in *Eustace*. The creature's midchase revelation effects the hunter's crucial reorientation in midcareer, in a manner suggestive of the dynamics of conversion. Resonating with the moment of spiritual awakening in the saintly *vita*, this passage invites consideration as the primary locus of Guigemar's heroic individuation.

Prior to this deeply unsettling encounter, Guigemar's youth had been auspicious; his father, a Breton nobleman, had sent him to serve the king, and after the latter had knighted him, his exploits had begun to earn him widespread renown (27–56). Like Placidus, however, a blemish mars his otherwise impeccable profile. At issue is not erroneous religious conviction, but rather a lack of affective inclinations: “De tant i out mespris Nature / Ke unc de nule amur n’out cure” (57–58) [Nature had erred in making him indifferent to any sort of love]. Guigemar had always shunned the attentions of eligible noble women (59–62) “il n’aveit de ceo talent” (64) [he had no desire for that]. His indifference was unanimously criticized: “Pur ceo le tienent a peri / E li estrange e si ami” (63–68). [Because of that both friends and strangers considered his case irremediable.] Apart from a vague reference to “Nature” (57), the source of his disinclination is not specified.⁹ It clearly sets him apart from his peers and leaves him unable to reciprocate love. Although devoid of amatory desire (“talent,” v. 64), he is fully responsive to the dark allure of the forest: “Talent li prist d’aler chacier . . . / Kar cil deduiz forment li plest” (76; 80) [He was taken by a desire to go hunting . . . for that pastime pleased him immensely]. The enticement of cynegetic pleasures offers a seductive threshold, beyond which the unanticipated occurs.

As in the *Vie de Saint Eustace* and Flaubert's tale, we move from a

The specular encounter in fictions of reciprocity

full-scale chase to the hunter's isolation with one specific quarry. When he mortally wounds the animal, Guigemar suffers both a thigh wound from his rebounding arrow and, far more acutely, the quarry's malediction. Like the stag pursued by Eustace, it initially signals the failure of the hunt, then utters a prophecy:

Oï! Lase! Jo sui ocise!
E tu, vassal, ki m'as nafree,
Tel seit la tue destinee:
Jamais n'aies tu medecine,
Ne par herbe ne par racine!
Ne par mire, ne par poisun
N'avras tu jamés garisun
De la plaie k'as en la quisse,
De si ke cele te guarisse
Ki souffera pur tue amur
Issi grant peine e tel dolor
K'unke femme taunt ne suffri,
E tu referas taunt pur li . . .
(106–18)

[Oh! Alas! I am slain! But you, vassal, who wounded me, may this be your fate: never shall you find remedy in herb or root, or be healed by physician or potion, and never shall the wound in your thigh be cured, lest she who heals you suffer for love of you more pain and agony than any woman ever endured, and you for her in equal measure . . .]

Once again, the animal encounter conveys a message addressed exclusively to this specific hunter. The preliminary verdict is vital, and Guigemar is now at last compelled to affirm his indifference to love: "*Il set assez e bien le dit / K'unke femme nule ne vit / A ki il aturnast s'amur / Ne kil guaresist de dolor*" (129–32) [*He is well aware, and even says so, that he never met a woman he could love or who or who could remedy his agony*]. While drawing his attention outward, the vision also directs him to the locus of discovery within himself. This inward descent in turn directs him outward, toward the one being capable of healing him, whereupon a second type of specularity comes to the fore: love, heretofore lacking in Guigemar's otherwise sterling profile, must henceforth compel him, but only toward the lady whose suffering in love for him equals his own for her. Only the mutual agony of *reciprocal*

love can engender the capacity to effect mutual healing. He must in effect find his feminine double, his mirror-image in terms of suffering occasioned by desire. The hind's malediction thus offers the hunter a reflexive reorientation, toward the previously unrecognized quarry within himself.

Here we see contrasts with the life of Eustace, where the stag's didacticism overshadows the hunter's state of mind. Guigemar's subjective state is heightened by certain descriptive details that emblemize his situation and attitude and awaken hermeneutic interest in his potential inner life and psychic states. For example, he is drawn to a most unlikely quarry: no solitary stag, such as that pursued by Placidus, but "une bise od un foün" [a hind with a fawn] (90). This "familial" pairing would seemingly rule out imminent carnage while also implying some special symbolic significance. This impression is reinforced when our expectations are defied as Guigemar undertakes to slay the hind:

Il tent sun arc, si trait a li!
En l'esclot la feri devaunt;
Ele chaï demeintenaunt;
La seete resort ariere,
Guigemar fiert en tel maniere,
En la quisse desk'al cheval,
Ke tost l'estuet descendre aval:
Ariere chiet sur l'erbe drue
Delez la bise k'out ferue!
(94–102)

[He drew his bow taut and fired, striking it in the temple; it slumped straightaway to the ground. The arrow bounced back and so struck Guigemar in the thigh, right down to the horse's hide, that he had to dismount; he fell backward onto the grassy carpet, right beside the very hind he had wounded!]

This reflexive doubling of the trauma seems highly significant. Guigemar anticipates Flaubert's Julian, whose encounter with a cervine "family" is also suggestive of a psychic disorder. Like Julian, Guigemar has long possessed latent self-knowledge that only now becomes accessible, through an independent informant, hence a type of specular encounter that contrasts with the stag's revelation to Placidus of verities that were previously foreign to his own cognitive sphere. For Guigemar,

the moment of *anagnorisis* is in effect a *re*-cognition.¹⁰ Despite this evidence of a symbolic enactment of profound psychic adjustments, any latent aggressive attitude toward his own mother seems unlikely; about her we know only that “A merveille l’amot sa mere” (39) [His mother loved him deeply]. More compelling is a sense that the incident exteriorizes a moment of affective transition: the violent separation of the faun and hind would thus be an objective correlative of the severance of an infantile bond. The symbolization of the hind passes from the maternal sphere to that of a prophetess enjoining the hero to find reciprocal love.¹¹ The informant’s metamorphosis from *mater* to *mediatrix* of the hero’s relation to the feminine sphere would thus betoken his move into the sphere of heterosexual love.

Although a reading of descriptive details as signifiers of affect might seem anachronistically “psychoanalytic,” works from remote periods do at times convey remarkably “analytic” insights. Here, indeed, the text subsequently endorses such a reading, in the gradual move from wounding as a physically specular event to its eventual reconfiguration as metaphor.¹² The wound inflicted upon the hind dissipates its maternal image and elicits its naming of the hero’s lack in the feminine sphere. Then the rebounding arrow that wounds Guigemar necessitates his quest for the reciprocal love that alone can heal him.¹³ Thus the literal trauma is gradually reconfigured as a psychic ordeal metaphorically conflating love and suffering, and culminating in explicit thematization of the compound figure: “Amur est plaie dedenz cors / E si ne piert nient defors” (483–84) [Love is a wound within the body, yet nothing shows on the outside].¹⁴ The double wounding is seen retrospectively as prefigurative of the double amatory wound suffered equally by hero and lady.

In addition, the hind’s antlers alloy the feminine and maternal image of the hind and faun with masculine overtones:

Tute fu blaunche cele beste,
Perches de cerf out en la teste.
(91–92)

[The beast was all white, with the antlers of a stag.]

It is an “androgynous” beast¹⁵ and thus, not unlike the stag in *Eustace*, offers an iconographically dense image: the maternal and

paternal figures are fused, so that a familial triad is replicated within the natural landscape, independent of the protagonist. Consequently, the symbolic injunction to move from infantile to heterosexual love implicitly emanates from both constituents of the parental order, in harmony with a conventional pattern of individuation.¹⁶ The hind's fusion of masculine and feminine features also prefigures the story's primary concern with uniting the couple. This proves difficult because various obstacles render two successive meetings abortive before their definitive union can be realized.

In this enterprise, the most important narrative function is once again that of wounding, which opens and closes the quest for love: it begins with Guigemar's wound and culminates in the mortal wound he finally inflicts upon his rival for the lady, Lord Meriaduc, thus abruptly ending the story. The inverse specularity between the wound sustained and the wound inflicted is significant in terms of the series of male figures in Guigemar's experience. With no apparent resistance on his part, his father had sent him away from the familial foyer and from the mother who loved him "a merveille" (39).¹⁷ Although this detail offers only a fleeting hint of father/son rivalry for the attentions of the mother, it assumes more importance retrospectively, when echoed in a context suggestive of a dream.¹⁸ Carried abroad while asleep on an enchanted ship, Guigemar finally fulfills the hind's injunction. The land of his ideal lady is a countervailing realm, somewhat reminiscent of an otherworldly venue in folk narrative – a country where, according to convention, the protagonist's lack is liquidated, and where, as in a dream, archaic, sometimes infantile material is remanifested in modified form. In this exotic setting the familial triad is reconfigured in terms more appropriate to Guigemar's psychic needs: once again, though with far greater negative intensity, a prohibitive male stands between him and the affectively valorized feminine figure. Yet this obstacle replicating the tensions implicit in the initial familial triad is now offset positively: while the masculine rival – the counterpart of the prohibitive paternal figure – is a superannuated, obsessively jealous husband who imprisons his young wife, she much prefers Guigemar to her rebarbative captor. This idyll, suggestive of oneiric fulfillment of a thinly disguised Oedipal wish, eventually turns to nightmare when the vicious husband, having discovered the couple *in flagrante delicto*,

banishes Guigemar. Again, he offers no apparent resistance to being sent away from a woman who loves him “a merveille.”¹⁹ In sum, the original severance from the maternal sphere at the initiative of the father is here transposed into a dreamlike realm and replayed in a traumatic key, and once again Guigemar acquiesces before an authoritative male who poses an obstacle between himself and the devoted female figure.²⁰

Unresolved in this oneiric setting, the problem shifts back to the thorny world of feudal circumstantiality, a world of hunting, combat, and siege – a world of wounds. In this setting, the lovers are eventually reunited, though again they are confronted by an authoritarian figure manifesting yet another replica of paternal prohibition: Meriaduc, the feudal lord whose own designs on the *malmariée* prompt him to forbid Guigemar to depart with the lady, despite their resolve to do so after finding the love tokens they had exchanged prior to their earlier separation.²¹ Hence the second remanifestation of a triad that places a masculine rival between Guigemar and the desired female. Yet this time instead of acquiescing, Guigemar slays his rival, and this, his first act of aggression since he attempted to slay the hind, also marks, in remarkably terse fashion, the end of the narrative:

Le chastel ad destruit e pris
E le seigneur dedenz ocis.
(879–80)

[He seized and destroyed the castle and killed the lord within.]

Guigemar has wrested the castle, that emblem *par excellence* of patriarchal authority, away from his rival and then summarily dispatched him, whereupon all interest in the hero's story appears to have been exhausted.

This abrupt ending obviously leaves certain questions unresolved, such as potential reprisals by the jealous husband, or the juridical implications of Guigemar's homicide, or the future social status of this hastily united couple, and so on.²² Loose threads of this sort occur throughout the *Lais*, however, and while such frequent inconsequentiality would be distressing in a novel by a Balzac or a Flaubert, there is a certain risk involved if we read – as some readers tend to do, perhaps unwittingly – a collection like the *Lais* from the horizon of

expectations of, say, realist or naturalist fiction. For by dwelling on inconsistent or unresolved details, we may perceive them anachronistically, as instances of deliberate “ironic play” with conventions, which they might well be in the hands of a practitioner of realism or a Borges; or else we may solicit the text unduly, with interpretive subtleties that these tales cannot sustain. In so doing, we risk imposing the standards of modern narrative types on a genre that represents very few of them among its resources. Marie’s *Lais*, like their anonymous counterparts, frequently show little or no concern for unresolved questions pertaining to literal events. Despite such indeterminacy, however, the *lai*, like the types of the folktale to which it is frequently related, characteristically culminates in a sense that the fundamental objectives of the story have been met. Regardless of unresolved questions, the sense of an economy of completion ultimately prevails. These *lais* from the Harley manuscript consistently signify the attainment of a satisfactory sense of closure despite circumstances or issues that remain unresolved.²³ An important objective later in this chapter will in fact be to show how in each of these *lais* a sense of completion stems from a highly characteristic configuration that effects the closing symbolic synthesis.

As we have perceived it thus far, *Guigemar* would be a tale of heroic individuation that dramatizes a conflict and then resolves it in a series of symbolically charged phases. The ultimate liquidation of the rival suggests that Guigemar has finally supplanted the masculine obstacle and reappropriated his authoritative role, and all that remains is to celebrate euphorically the definitive union of the couple:

A grant joie s’amie en meine:
Ore ad trespassee sa peine.
(881–82)

[Joyfully he leads his beloved away; his ordeal is now over.]

According to this remarkably succinct view of narrative adequation, Guigemar has transcended his anguish – “trespassee sa peine” – which in retrospect could, from this perspective, be perceived in terms of an initial oedipal predicament, the need to transcend the “problem of the mother,” by initiating sexual maturation beyond the mother/infant dyad.²⁴ Then, in a transitional stage, the remote idyllic love effectively

veiled the underlying replication of the oedipal dyad while intensifying the threatening demeanor of the prohibitive paternal figure. Deferred until the third “act,” this “problem of the father” is finally resolved when Guigemar kills the third configuration of a rival who would remove him from the presence of the desired feminine other. According to this view, the abortive and self-damaging gesture of wounding that marked the onset of Guigemar’s specular encounter and opened the way to heroic maturation would also logically require its ultimate counterpart at the culmination of the process: the elimination and displacement of a replica of the paternal rival. Hence a functional symmetry, between the problem emblemized by Guigemar’s specular encounter with the hind and the ultimate resolution of that problem: the symbolic representation of his transcendence of an oedipal fixation. While the hero’s specular encounter in *Guigemar* would thus be the anchor of a feudal fiction of love won, then lost, then regained, it would also be the symbolic nucleus of an Oedipal dynamic woven into a narrative enactment of masculine individuation. In such a reading of *Guigemar*, the cynegetic specular encounter assumes the dimensions of a powerful condensation of affect that nourishes the symbolic registers of the ensuing fiction, dramatizing in the hero’s experience a “working through” toward resolution of fundamental conflicts.²⁵ The hero’s “case study” would thus be seen as unfolding in a series of progressive displacements of the intersubjective triad comprised of the self and its masculine and feminine imagoes.

However interesting the foregoing analysis of *Guigemar* along the lines of a fiction of heroic individuation may appear, it must ultimately be deemed unsatisfactory, either as a reading of the work as a whole or of the specular encounter’s significance within it. Here, as in certain other *lais* in the collection, individuation is not the overriding concern. An interpretation of *Guigemar* based on the maturation of the male protagonist seems all the more reductive in that – rare suggestions to the contrary notwithstanding – the work was authored by a woman.²⁶ With regard to the significant paradigm of masculine development, the hero’s specular encounter is indeed the pivotal center, but only of his own biography.²⁷ Yet *Guigemar* is much more than a vehicle of heroic biography, as we see when his dramatic specular encounter with the hind is later complemented by two equally significant recurrences of

this same schema, which together subordinate the project of masculine individuation to a much more important concern, one that is also profoundly marked by specularity: for if Guigemar's ventry in the cynegetic sense provides him, in the form of a specular encounter, with the language and symbolization necessary to awaken his receptivity to ventry in the amorous sense, this will be possible exclusively with his feminine double, the one being who suffers from an amatory deficit virtually identical – and in reflexive symmetry – to his own. Further analysis is therefore necessary, in order to account for other highly significant occurrences of the specular encounter, in the presentation of the lady, then in the union of the couple.

Upon Guigemar's arrival in the remote realm, the lady's situation is depicted as similar to his. Her existence – as a cloistered *mal mariée*, has remained bereft of all amatory engagement (209–32). Moreover, as if to heighten the reciprocity created by the similarities between Guigemar's circumstances and her own, her affective lack is symbolized in a manner reminiscent of his earlier encounter with the hind. The fundamental problem is signified reflexively back to her, by means of a symbolic configuration external to herself. This specular confrontation, an instructive “mirror of the *mal mariée*,” as it were,²⁸ she finds depicted in the incendiary drama adorning her bedchamber:

La chaumbre ert peinte tut entour;
Venus, la deuesse d'amur,
Fu tres bien mise en la peinture;
Les traiz mustROUT e la nature
Cument hom deit amur tenir
E lealment e bien servir.
Le livre Ovide, ou il enseigne
Comment chascuns s'amur estreine,
En un fu ardant le gettout,
E tuz iceus escumengout
Ki jamais cel livre lirreient
Ne sun enseignement fereient.
La fu la dame enclose e mise.
(233–45)

[There were paintings around the bedchamber; there was a fine portrait of Venus, the goddess of love, illustrating her features and likeness, and how one should maintain love and serve it loyally and

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well. She was casting Ovid's book, in which he instructs us on how to restrain love, into a conflagration and excommunicating all who would read it and heed its advice.]

Although this vivid, animated bonfire is in some respects as violent as Guigemar's hunting accident, the medium conveying the specular message is of a wholly different nature. Not the apostrophe of an informant but, as in other instances examined later in this study, a figural representation.²⁹ The mural portrays the militant eroticism of an impassioned Venus, as she casts Ovid's *Remedia amoris*, and with it all amatory reserve, into the flames and "excommunicates" its adherents.³⁰ Although each of these two instances of the specular schema is unique in terms of subject matter, the semantic substratum is virtually the same in each case, though contrastive in terms of gender. Just as the symbolic metamorphosis of the hind from nurturant parent to prophetess moves Guigemar from excessive allegiance to the prohibited maternal figure to a search for his feminine amatory "other," the mural signifies the lady's imminent move from the nefarious constraints of a prohibitive, authoritarian paternal figure, her jealous husband, to union with her masculine amatory "other."³¹ In both cases, then, the specular representation prescribes the same type of psychic transition: a shift of affective allegiance and liberation from bondage to a symbol of the parental figure of the opposite sex. Each in its own way carries the same injunction, to abrogate this sterile servitude, and to effect a reciprocal amatory bond.³²

Thus, like Eustace and his spouse, whose separate specular encounters soon bring them to a common purpose, Guigemar and his lady behold specular configurations of their own circumstances; these motivate their encounter and, eventually, their reciprocation of love. Before this mutual relation can be crystallized, however, they, not unlike Eustace and his wife, must exchange essential information about themselves and then act in unison, despite foreseen tribulations. Thus on their first meeting Guigemar and the lady exchange autobiographical accounts featuring reminiscences of their respective illuminations (311–58). After evoking his youth in a single phrase, Guigemar recapitulates at length his wounding, the hind's prophecy, his voyage, and his quest for the lady who can heal him. Lamenting her loveless marriage and the rigors of her imprisonment, the lady curses the

emasculated priest set to guard her door, in terms that recall the fire kindled by Venus to destroy the *Remedia amoris*, the handbook of those who would impede love's service – "Ceo doinse Deus que mals feus l'arde!" (348) [May God let him perish in hellish blaze!]. Each self-representation also mirrors thematically the other's bondage. Together they mark the inception of a new, and increasingly prevalent, concern with the achievement of intersubjective *reciprocity*.

Subsequently, each suffers alone the agony of nascent love, and in reminiscence of the specular trauma: Guigemar's anguish recalls his physical wound and its metaphorical displacement – "Mes Amur l'ot feru al vif; / Ja ert sis quors en grant estrif, / Kar la dame l'ad si nafré, / Tut ad sun païs ublié. / De sa plaie nul mal ne sent. / Mut suspire anguisusement" (379–84) [But Love had struck him to the quick; he was already so distraught at heart, so deeply had the lady smitten him, that he no longer thought of his homeland. He felt no pain from his wound, though many an anguished sigh escaped him.] Meanwhile, her awakening passion recalls the Venusian conflagration that now begins to consume them both; she "esteit reschaufée / Del feu dont Guigemar se sent / Que sun queor alume e esprent" (390–92) [was heated by the same fire that warmed Guigemar, the one her heart sparked and kindled]. Both are in the throes of love sickness occasioned by love experienced in solitude, unavowed, and therefore incurable except through mutual avowal and consummation.³³ To achieve this, the original specular message requires reiteration, here effected by a mediatory go-between, the jealous husband's niece, who is the lady's companion and confidante. Easily recognizing her mistresses's hidden passion and surmising the same in Guigemar, she boldly persuades him to avow his feelings (445–53) and brings the couple together for that purpose. He implores her to heal him – "si vus ne me volez guarir, / Dunc m'estuet il en fin murir" (503–04) [if you do not wish to heal me, then I must ultimately die] – and fervently requests her *druërie* – "Jo vus requeor de *druërie*" (505) [I beseech you to reciprocate my love] – that is, for *reciprocal* love, the only kind of love capable of fulfilling the hind's injunction.³⁴

Following their sojourn in the lady's realm for more than a year, another kind of specularity comes into prominence. This one is material in nature, capable of tangibly commemorating their love and thus, eventually, of validating it at the moment of recognition. Aware

that discovery of their trysts will lead to their being separated, the couple exchange material *druëries*, tokens of mutual fidelity to emblemize their love as an exclusive bond. The knot she devises in Guigemar's shirt only she can undo: "Cungié vus doins, u ke ceo seit, / D'amer cele kil defferat / E ki despleier le savrat" (560–62) [You have my permission, wherever it may be, to love the woman able to loosen and undo it]. The belt he affixes to her body he alone can remove: "Ki la bucle purrat ovrir / Sanz despecier e sanz partir, / Il li prie que celui aint" (573–75) [Whoever can open the clasp, without taking it apart or breaking it away, he asks her to love that man]. These objects are eventually the components of a poignant recognition scene (743–836).³⁵ They also furnish the intrigue with a literally double "dé-nouement," while introducing a new type of mirroring, one capable of transcending separation and discontinuity. This is accomplished by the love tokens: self and other are related across time and space by what could be called a reflexivity of artifice, whereby each devises a means of authenticating the other's identity when (s)/he eventually encounters the product of his or her own craftsmanship. Each artisan creates the conditions of a virtual agency – "cele kil defferat"; "Ki la bucle purrat ovrir" – that only he or she can fulfill. In so doing, each bestows upon the other an emblem of his or her own selfhood, fashioning a means of self-recognition tailored upon the material body of the beloved.

Consequently, the specular schema that had twice served to signify a problematic individual selfhood through an encounter with its own depths and corrective designs has by now become instead a means of mirroring the self in the image of the other. Fulfilled thereby is the hind's prescription that Guigemar's quest lead to the kind of love relation that Marie designates throughout the collection as *druërie*, reciprocal love. "Amis, menez en vostre *druel*!" (836) [My darling, take your beloved away!] is the lady's exhortation at the conclusion of their mutual verbal and vestimentary recognition.³⁶ Thus, at the end of its successive metamorphoses throughout the narrative, the specular encounter achieves a symbolic crystallization of the union idealized earlier, that would constitute for all time a story "Dunt tuit cil s'esmerveillerunt / Ki aiment e amé avrunt / U ki pois amerunt après" (119–21) [about which all who love, as well as lovers past and future, will marvel]. Ultimately, Guigemar and his lady are thereby doubly

valorized, as discrete selves, yet also as individuals conjoined in a union exemplary of the mystery of love founded on optimal reciprocity.

In this respect *Guigemar* is a model for the *lais* that follow in Marie's collection, in all of which the specular encounter effects the crucial shift toward a relation configured in terms of some type of reciprocity.³⁷ We have seen how crucial mediations are effected by a series of *revelations*, as the specular encounter is successively reconfigured according to three different revelatory types: discursive (the hind's injunction); visual (the mural in the lady's bedchamber); and vestimentary (the tokens of recognition exchanged by the lovers). To varying degrees, all three enrich the communicative exchanges with symbolic details that mediate a protagonist's shift from one cognitive or situational register to another by indirect means, and in each case special emphasis falls on transformations of psychic or affective states. As we now make our way through the other *lais* in the collection, we shall see that this powerful conjugation of specular encounter and reciprocity is a vital factor in binding these twelve texts into a unified ensemble. It will be apparent, however, that the major moments of specular encounter are by no means predictable junctures: there is a broad spectrum of variance, especially as regards the schema's fundamental mediatory principle, according to which the specular message typically mediates the recipient's former level of awareness or achievement and a significantly new orientation engendered by its contents. In addition to the mediatory function of *revelation* in *Guigemar*, we find four other types of mediation elsewhere in the collection. These four types, *communication*, *counsel*, *judgment*, and *disclosure of personal and lineal identity*, will serve as convenient rubrics as we consider briefly the *lais* that fall under each one. After looking at how the specular encounter functions in each of the *lais*, we shall broach the larger issue of how its repeated contextualizations achieve a comprehensive architecture unifying the twelve *Lais* in the Harley manuscript.

MEDIATORY COMMUNICATION: *LAUSTIC* AND *CHIEVREFOIL*

The specular encounter characteristically brings two beings into a fundamentally communicative exchange of information. Although in

most instances this communication is further identifiable in terms of speech acts, such as revelation, counsel, judgment, delineation, and so forth, occasionally the processes of communication themselves are featured. Thus, both *Laüstic* and *Chievrefoil* foreground the intricate communicative strategies involved in exchanges of specular information. Paradoxically, the two briefest *lais* in the collection (160 and 118 verses, respectively) also offer the most intricate and subtle means of communication, thanks to the ways in which brevity and implication serve to increase their signifying density.

Laüstic, like *Guigemar*, turns on the triangle of lady, lover, and jealous husband. All three of its major divisions emphasize communicative processes. The initial situation is one of felicitous communication between the lady and her neighbor with whom she shares a secret passion, facilitated by the proximity of their dwellings. Although a stone wall and the fact that she is kept under surveillance by her husband create insurmountable obstacles to the consummation of their love, they can at least converse. Spatial obstacles notwithstanding, their communication at this stage is relatively uncomplicated, not unlike their playful exchange of the little tokens of affection they toss to one another.

In the middle segment, this euphorically communicative interchange is abruptly truncated by the jealous husband, whose vindictive machinations entail other types of communication, based on metaphor and innuendo. The couple's cryptically understated sparring acquires the special prominence afforded by direct discourse. In reply to her husband's query concerning her nocturnal absences from the marital bed, the lady warily couches the truth in metaphor:

Sire, la dame li respunt,
Il nen ad joië en cest mund
Ki n'ot le laüstic chanter.
Pur ceo me vois ici ester.
Tant ducement l'i oi la nuit
Que mut me semble grant deduit;
Tant m'i delit e tant le voil
Que jeo ne puis dormir de l'oïl.
(83–90)

[Sire, the lady replied, anyone who doesn't hear the nightingale sing has no earthly joy. I come here and stand for that very reason. I hear it

sing so sweetly at night that it delights me greatly. I take such pleasure in it and so desire it that I can't sleep a wink.]

Her effort to eclipse her nocturnal interlocutor behind the mellifluous nightingale fails miserably: "Quant li sire ot que ele dist, / D'ire e de maltalent en rist" (91–92) [When her husband heard what she said, he laughed in wrathful contempt]. To her dismay she discovers her husband's predilection for dark humor as he literalizes her metaphor.³⁸ Having had a nightingale ensnared, he announces his successful venture: "J'ai le laüstic enginnié / Pur quei vus avez tant veillié. / Des or poëz gisir en peis: / Il ne vus esveillerat meis." (107–10). [I've caught the nightingale that's kept you awake so much. From now on you can rest in peace: it'll awaken you no more.]

Here the specular encounter effects a dramatic mid-course reversal, as she becomes entangled in her own poetic veil. Her fraudulent complaint of insomnia is reflected back to her in a reply bristling with sarcasm, along with a tangible remedy for her sleeplessness, the inert corpse of the bird. Suddenly bereft of her metaphor when the object it signified materializes, she is henceforth deprived of the idyll her poetic figure had failed to conceal. The husband leaves unaddressed the underlying cause of his jealousy – her suspected lover – but hints ominously at his homicidal inclinations – "Des or poëz gisir en peis" – which he unleashes on the avian surrogate of her lover. Seizing it, he wrings its neck and flings the bleeding carcass onto her chemise. With grisly vengeance, metaphor returns literally upon the lady, doubling the specular message with a crimson index of his unspoken rage and her ineffable grief. In this grotesque interlude of domestic violence, as in numerous other scenes of private life in the *Lais*, the specular encounter acquires particular intensity in an intimate or secluded setting.³⁹

In the third panel of the triptych, the specular encounter hosts an even more intricate stratagem, combining communication with commemoration. Fearful her lover will assume she has forsaken him, she devises a means of dispatching both corpus and writ: "Le laüstic li trametrai, / L'aventure li manderai" (133–34) [I shall send him the nightingale, and have him informed of what's transpired]. Previously unsuccessful at figural embroidery of a falsehood to deceive her

husband, she now resorts to literal embroidery of the truth: “En une piece de samit / A or brusdé e tut escrit / Ad l’oiselet envelopé; / Un suen vaslet ad apelé, / Sun message li ad chargié, / A sun ami l’ad enveié” (135–40). [In a length of samite embroidered in gold with ornamental inscriptions she enveloped the little bird, summoned one of her servants, gave him her message to deliver, sent him to her lover]. Thus, as at the end of *Guigemar*, the specular encounter is reconfigured in association with a tangible artifact. Previously the figural veil of the truth, a metaphor *in absentia*, the avian creature now becomes a centerpiece *in praesentia* of the autobiographical emblem cleverly devised to enshroud it.

Mediating the lovers, this specular encounter is itself enacted through multiple mediations. The inert testimony of spousal violence is lovingly enveloped as an elegiac emblem of reciprocal love and dutifully delivered, along with an explanatory gloss, by her valet. This carefully crafted *involucrum* doubly specularizes the lover, mirroring his loss, but also locating him within their common story of communication interrupted then restored, on a new, mediated basis. The lady compensates for the tragic reversal in the middle segment by embroidering the couple, along with the enshrined nightingale, into the specular *abyme* of their own story. What they, defying the distance between them, may now venerate is a shared awareness.⁴⁰ For they are now united in a common consciousness, and by a bond of reciprocity founded on suffering, in equal measure, of unrequited love.⁴¹

Whereas in *Laüstic* the jealous husband foils the lovers’ search for intimacy, in *Chievrefoil* Tristan – “Tristram” in the Harley manuscript, – and the queen enjoy a clandestine meeting. At the heart of this brief anecdote lies the most fundamental of all the motifs in the legend of Tristan and Iseut, encounter itself. Their tryst here recalls many others in narratives about them, as the narrator’s passing mention of oral and written accounts seems to emphasize (5–10).⁴² After a year’s exile in Wales, Tristan has returned to Cornwall to see the queen; learning from peasants of her imminent passage through the forest, he arranges a meeting.⁴³ When the anticipated reunion finally occurs, however, it is singularly anticlimactic. The emphasis instead falls on Tristan’s preliminary communicative behavior.⁴⁴

Yet between the mode, or modes, of communication and the

message itself the relationship is unclear. Like Guigemar and his lady and the lady in *Laüstic*, Tristan deftly crafts a communicative object: “Une codre trencha par mi, / Tute quarreie la fendi. / Quant il ad paré le bastun, / De sun custel escrit sun nun” (51–54) [He split a hazel branch down the middle and cut its sides foursquare. After hewing the stick, he carved his name into it with his knife]. Like the enshrined “laüstic,” this contrived signifier summons into consciousness a vast universe of memory and affect. The narrator notes that such a stratagem for convening the couple had served on an earlier occasion, so there is little doubt that the encounter will indeed occur. Our uncertainty concerns the message itself: “Ceo fu la summe de l’escrit / Qu’il li aveit mandé e dit . . .” (61–62) [He wrote no more than that, for he had notified her . . .]. Was the “summe de l’escrit” encapsulated in fifteen lines as the essence of the message (63–78); was it inscribed on the hazel branch, perhaps in ogamic script, or rather in a message Tristan had already sent to the queen (“mandé e dit,” v. 62)?⁴⁵

The abundant critical commentary these obscure passages continue to elicit illustrates the poetics of enigma evoked in the prologue, whereby authors of antiquity, according to Priscian, wrote obscurely to ensure their active reception later on, by those who would be able to “gloser la lettre / E de lur sen le surplus mettre” (15–16) [prepare a gloss of the text and supply their (antecedent: “livres,” v. 11) latent meaning].⁴⁶ The precise mode of the message’s transmission will necessarily remain an irresolvable issue.⁴⁷ Its substance is in contrast relatively apparent: Tristan has long awaited an appropriate opportunity to see the queen, and this is a matter of life or death – “Kar ne poeit vivre sanz li” (67) [For he could not live without her]. Here the profound significance of their relationship emerges from the complementary perspectives of the narrator and Tristan himself. A poetic gloss distills the precariousness of their circumstances:

D’euls deus fu il tut autresi
Cume del chievrefoil esteit
Ki a la codre se perneit:
Quant il s’i est laciez e pris
E tut entur le fust s’est mis,
Ensemble poënt bien durer,
Mes ki puis les voelt deseवर,

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Li codres muert hastivement
E li chievrefoilz ensemment.
(68–76)

[The two of them were like the honeysuckle that grasps the hazel branch: when it has taken hold and enlaced itself around the wood, they can both endure together, but when someone undertakes to separate them, the hazel suddenly expires, and so does the honeysuckle.]

This botanical simile specularizes the couple in terms of a crucial reciprocity, one that thrives on material presence, in the form of a corporeal relationship unmediated by messages, but also one that is exceedingly fragile, in that it will immediately expire if the two intertwined lives are ever definitively disentangled. For the queen, Tristan synthesizes this vital symbiosis of hazel branch and honeysuckle in terms of the necessary conditions of their common survival: “Bele amie, si est de nus: / Ne vus sanz mei, ne jeo sanz vus” (77–78) [Fair beloved, thus are we: neither you without me, nor I without you].

Like the lady’s hermeneutically dense message at the end of *Laüstic*, Tristan’s synthesis specularizes its addressee by means of a rememorative emblem of their own story. More so than at any other moment in the *Lais*, the succinctness of this specular encounter partakes of the sublime, as it distills the very essence of Marie’s concept of *druërie* as reciprocal love.⁴⁸ However – and this is an issue to which we must return – it also idealizes amatory reciprocity in terms of a state of nature impossible to replicate amidst the contingencies of human existence. Hence an essentially pessimistic image of reciprocal relations.

MEDIATION BY COUNSEL: *DEUS AMANZ, EQUITAN,*
BISCLAVRET, AND CHAITIVEL

While many types of mediation effected by the specular encounter concern important aspects of the past, four of Marie’s *lais* feature a mediatory *counsel* with respect to possible worlds that have yet to come to pass. All four illustrate the same formula: an unfortunate couple is finally separated permanently, either by death or irreconcilable differences, in the aftermath of some counsel that had specified a strategy for achieving a specific objective. In each case, the specular counsel emerges

at the crucial turning point, as one member of the couple prescribes what the other must do to solve a problem or surmount an obstacle, thus conditioning the denouement. Although the couples in these *lais* do not ultimately prevail, the specular schema is, as elsewhere in the collection, accessory to a final configuration of reciprocity associated in some way with the theme of love.

While *Deus Amanz* recalls folktales in which the hero contends for the hand of a king's daughter, this monarch's excessive paternal devotion prompts him to make the conventional test of the suitors' prowess an impossible ordeal: the contender must carry the princess to the summit of a mountain without pause. After the failure of many suitors, the test is temporarily circumvented by the daughter's secret liaison with a noble youth. Unwilling to vex her father, however, she rejects her lover's proposal that they flee together: "Autre *cunseil* vus estuet prendre / Kar cest ne voil jeo pas entendre" (101–02) [You will have to devise another plan, for I will not hear of that one]. Aware that he is physically not equal to the terms of the ordeal, she counsels recourse to a potion that will give him the requisite strength:

En Salerne ai une parente,
Riche femme, mut ad grant rente.
Plus de trente anz i ad esté;
L'art de phisike ad tant usé
Que mut est saive de mescines.
Tant cunuist herbes e racines,
Si vus a li volez aler
E mes lettres od vus porter
E mustrer li vostre aventure,
Ele en prendra cunseil e cure:
Teus leituaires vus durat
E teus beivres vus baillerat
Que tut vus recunforterunt
E bone vertu vus durrunt.
(103–16)

[In Salerno I have a relative, a wealthy woman of property who has been there for thirty years and more. She has practiced the art of physic so extensively that she's highly adept in medical matters and so knowledgeable about herbs and roots that if you wish to visit her, give her my letter and explain your situation, she will entertain the matter

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and take care of it: she'll give you tonics and provide you with potions that will reinforce you and give you sufficient strength.]

This counsel offers the lover a virtual image of his own future and lays out the main lines of the rest of the story. In short, the king's daughter becomes the clever artificer of the fiction's future, amplified in the ensuing narrative, as he dutifully carries out the prescribed quest.⁴⁹ The scheme fails, as he refuses to avail himself of the elixir during their ascent: "Kar n'ot en lui point de mesure" (189) [For restraint was not among his qualities].⁵⁰ Both expire during the ascent, he of pride, she of overwhelming grief, yet they are poetically united in perpetuity, in a denouement reminiscent of *Laüstic*: like the ornate coffer containing the nightingale, the flowers that flourish where the potion was spilled offer perennial commemoration of a love that in this world was both reciprocal yet ultimately impossible.

The woman's prescriptive counsel to her lover also provides the central transition in *Equitan*. The eponymous king has for some time been involved in a secret love affair with his seneschal's wife. When his subjects urge him to marry, he attempts to allay the lady's fear of losing him by telling her he wishes to marry no one else, "Si vostre sire fust finez" (226) [If your husband were deceased]. Thus he plants the seed of a homicidal strategy whose full fruition the woman fantasizes as she lays out the perfidious, gruesome phases of her prescriptive counsel. First the king must allay her husband's suspicions by accompanying him in the hunt,⁵¹ then join him in being bled and bathed. She, meanwhile, will prepare a scalding ablution for her spouse, cruelly savoring in advance its lethal effects: "E jeo ferai les bains tempre / E les deus cuves aporter; / Sun bain ferai chaut e buillant: / Suz ciel nen ad humme vivant / Ne fust escaudez e malmis / Einz que dedenz se feust asis" (251–56) [And I'll have the bath water heated and the two basins brought in; I'll make his bath boiling hot; there's not a man under the dome of heaven who wouldn't be scalded and done for the instant he sat in it]. With the cunning of a heroine of *film noir*, she even foresees the need to dissipate possible suspicions, specifying that the vassals of both the king and the seneschal be convened for a kind of collective "autopsy" to certify that death occurred by natural causes (257–60).

In both *Equitan* and *Deus Amanz* the clandestine couple's legitimate

union is blocked by the legal obstacle posed by a male relative; their counter-strategy, based on the woman's counsel, ultimately fails.⁵² Hence a proleptic type of specularity culminating in an unexpected reversal and failure resulting from some type of excess.⁵³ Equitan and his accomplice perish by their own homicidal device with quasi-farcical rapidity.⁵⁴ Despite the inclusion of subject matter suggestive of the fabliau, the story clearly asserts its kinship with the other *lais* in the collection by making the specular encounter accessory to a closing commemoration of a reciprocal relation by means of a symbolic object: contrary to its intended function, the seething tub unites the conniving couple in death. However, the love that links them is no egalitarian bond. On the model of *fin'amor*, the king plays the humble suppliant to the seneschal's wife in the role of dominatrix: "Ne me tenez mie pur rei, / Mes pur vostre humme e vostre ami / Vos sieiez dame e jeo servanz, / Vos orguilluse e jeo preianz" (170–71; 175–76) [Think not of me as king, but as your vassal and your companion You shall be the lady and I the servant, you the proud one and I the suppliant.] In thus feudalizing their love relationship, however, he treacherously abrogated his reciprocal feudal bond with his seneschal.⁵⁵ This couple's reciprocal relation is not fueled by mutual love, but by their common assent to the homicidal conspiracy. The scalding basin thus commemorates the negative reciprocity founded on collusive scheming driven by a lustful mutual passion.⁵⁶

Bisclavret also features an unwanted spouse, the couple intent upon doing away with him, and the woman's counsel as to how this can be accomplished, and once again the couple is foiled. Terrified by her husband's periodic transformations into a *bisclavret* (63), the wife instructs a suitor to steal her spouse's garments and thus abandon him in his beastly state; after which she marries her obliging collaborator.⁵⁷ As in *Equitan* and *Deus Amanz*, the stratagem fails, this time because the motif of counsel recurs in the principal specular encounter that leads to the denouement. Responding to the court's perplexity as to why *Bisclavret*, normally a gentle creature, had suddenly waxed violent, the monarch's wise counselor resolves the case with the aplomb of a scholastic tutor: the beast's venom was highly specific: "Unke mes humme ne tucha / Ne felunie ne mustra, / Fors a la dame qu'ici vei" (245–47) [It never touched nor was vicious toward anyone, except this

lady you see here]. Moreover, “Ceo est la femme al chevalier / Que taunt suliez avoir chier, / Ki lung tens ad esté perduz, / Ne seümes qu’est devenus” (251–54) [She’s the wife of that knight you esteemed so highly, the one who disappeared a long while ago, and we didn’t know what had become of him]. Hence his counsel: “Kar metez la dame en destreit, / S’aucune chose vus direit / Pur quei ceste bete la heit. / Fetes li dire s’el le seit!” (255–58) [Interrogate the woman to see if she’ll tell you anything about why this beast hates her. Make her say it if she knows anything!].

The sage pierces the enigma by constructing an hypothesis, proceeding from *curious circumstances* – the beast’s selective violence – to a *plausible explanation* – this reaction relates to her spouse’s disappearance – and thence to the *case* – Bisclavret is himself the lost husband.⁵⁸ Thus the initial perfidious counsel is offset by the counsel of wisdom. As in *Guigemar*, the final reciprocal relation is confirmed by a vestimentary proof, though in the end, feudal, and not amatory, reciprocity prevails.⁵⁹ For it is the king who, in the role of addressee, enacts the specular protocol, thus recovering a loyal courtier, and his ceremonious conferral of the vestments of vassalage is suggestive of a symbolic renewal of a reciprocal bond between monarchy and chivalry.

In *Chaitivel*, on the other hand, the misfortunes of chivalry are paramount, while the specular encounter provides the etiology of the *lai*’s title. A noblewoman had welcomed the attentions of four suitors.⁶⁰ When in a tournament all four had vied in her honor, three had perished.⁶¹ The fourth, wounded and impotent, she took into her care for convalescence. When she informs him of her intention to honor him and his dead rivals with a *lai* entitled *Quatre Dols* – “Pur ceo que tant vus ai amez, / Voil que mis doels seit remembrez; / De vus quatre ferai un lai / E *Quatre Dols* le numerai” (201–4) [Because I loved you all so much I wish that my grief be remembered. About the four of you I’ll compose a lay and name it *Four Woes*] – he adamantly insists that she choose a different title: “Dame, fetes le lai novel, / Si l’apez *Le Chaitivel*!” (207–08) [Lady, make your new lay, but name it *The Wretched One*]. Displaying a flair for argumentation, he then offers an impassioned justification (“reisun,” 209) for his counsel. The others are dead, while he alone must endure the daily torture of seeing her, though incapable of consummating his love (211–22). His peroration

emphasizes her cruelty and his misery: “Teus cent maus me fetes suffrir! / Mieuz me vaudreit la mort tenir! / Pur c’ert li lais de mei nomez: / *Le Chaitivel* iert apelez. / Ki *Quatre Dols* le numera / Sun propre nun li changera” (223–28) [You put me through a hundred agonies of this sort. I’d be better off dead! For this reason the lay will be named for me and entitled *The Wretched One*. Whoever calls it *Four Woes* would be altering its appropriate title].

Unlike the instances of specular counsel discussed above, this one proposes no specific strategy. It is a matter of ethics, not logistics, and of changing the addressee’s attitude, so she will begin to perceive his plight – and the two of them as a couple.⁶² Moreover, the disconsolate suitor’s argument on behalf of his own title specularizes – apparently for the first time – the lady’s egocentrism, offering her access, at last, to an independent observer’s perception of her vain insensitivity.⁶³ Her assent to his persuasive argumentation suggests a change in her self-perception, one whose benefits also accrue to the textual production of *Chaitivel* itself, as Marie retells it in a manner conducive to its instructive reception.⁶⁴ Despite contrasts with the other instances of counsel, this example also offers an effective rhetorical appeal to its addressee, with particularly fine passages of deliberative or persuasive discourse in direct style. As do all of Marie’s *lais*, it also makes the specular encounter a crucial accessory to the commemoration of a reciprocal relationship within a couple by means of a signifier featured near the poem’s end, in this instance the poem’s title: given their mutual assent thereto, this title – “*Le Chaitivel*” – is akin to the perennials in *Deus Amanz*, the scalding basin in *Equitan*, and the chivalric vestments in *Bisclavret*; all four are emblematic of a closing reciprocity conditioned by specular counsel.

MEDIATORY JUDGMENT: LANVAL

Among Marie’s *Lais* only in *Lanval* is the specular encounter invested with the mediatory function of judgment, in a climax that at last sets the eponymous knight before a true reflection of himself. Prior to this denouement, Lanval is repeatedly confronted with inaccurate or contradictory self-images, in a story that frequently interrelates issues of judgment and identity. As in *Guigemar*, the protagonist’s status is

initially positive with but one exception, Lanval's failure to receive merited material rewards: he is an outsider at court, and Arthur overlooks him when lavishing his *largesse* on his vassals. This flaw in the vital feudal reciprocity is all the more inappropriate given Lanval's meritorious service and superlative qualities that earn him the envy – even the enmity – of many of his peers (21–26). Significantly, though *largesse* figures among Lanval's major virtues, this material privation prevents him from exercising it properly, until the problem is rectified with the help of a compensatory judgment from the otherworld.

As in the case of Guigemar, Lanval's earliest specular encounter partakes of the marvelous and occurs in a rurally liminal setting. Two damsels summon him to their fairy mistress, a creature whose attributes – “tant est pruz e sage e bele” (72) [she is so meritorious, wise and beautiful] – make her virtually the feminine double of the mortal she has chosen to honor. Again as in *Guigemar*, the hero's initial encounter introduces the theme of reciprocity, though here the informant and the ideal feminine other are one: “De luinz vus sui venue quere! / Se vus estes pruz e curteis, / Emperere ne quens ne reis / N'ot unkes tant joie ne bien, / Kar jo vus aim sur tute rien” (112–16) [I've come from afar seeking you. If you are worthy and courteous, no emperor, count or king ever experienced such joy or contentment, for I love you more than anything else]. His affective reciprocation is spontaneous, absolute, and redolent of the zeal of the newly converted: “Ne savriez rien comander / Que jeo ne face a mun poeir, / Turt a folie u a saveir. / Jeo ferai voz comandemenz; / Pur vus guerpilai tutes genz” (124–28) [There is nothing you could request that I would not do if I could, whether in folly or in wisdom. I shall carry out your orders; for you I shall forsake all others]. This eager response foreshadows his ultimately permanent disappearance into the fairy's realm.

In addition to amatory reciprocity, this precursor of Mélusine offers him unlimited material prosperity.⁶⁵ Above all, she is able to compensate abundantly for his single deficiency in the world of feudal transactions.⁶⁶ Thus, upon returning from his sojourn with the *fée*, “Lanval donout les riches duns, / Lanval aquitout les prisuns, / Lanval vesteit les juggleürs, / Lanval feseit les granz honors! / N'i ot estrange ne privé / A ki Lanval n'eüst doné” (209–14). [Lanval gave lavish gifts; Lanval freed prisoners; Lanval arrayed minstrels; Lanval bestowed major fiefs! There

was neither stranger nor intimate friend to whom he would not have given something.] The anaphora highlighting Lanval's euphoric generosity to intimates and foreigners alike pointedly contrasts his *largesse* with Arthur's earlier neglect of this "foreign" hero.⁶⁷

Lanval's new prosperity, however, is soon mitigated by a second negatively specular judgment emanating, once again, from within the court. Like Mélusine, the fairy's gifts are contingent upon total secrecy.⁶⁸ Lanval violates this interdiction when the queen, whose attentions he has spurned, falsely accuses him of homosexuality.⁶⁹ Lanval is now caught between the contradictory self-images tendered by the fairy and the vindictive queen, the one covertly exalting his profile as a worthy beneficiary of a supernatural agency, the other a grotesque caricature. The resulting dilemma pits disclosure of the fairy's correct but secret specularization of his own ethos and loss of her ideally reciprocated love, against allowing the queen's mendacious calumny to prevail at the expense of the court's esteem. Impulsively, Lanval opts for the former course, championing alone the true, though gravely imperiled, reflection of himself.

The intrigue thus moves through successive judgments – the king's, the fairy's, then the queen's – each reversing its predecessor while necessitating a further judgment. The crisis stems from Lanval's assertion that his mistress surpasses the queen in beauty, which activates the process leading to a decisive judgment, enacted before the court. A collective body will presumably determine the truth and prescribe the appropriate – positive or negative – sanctions.⁷⁰ But the trial is suddenly interrupted by the fairy's arrival:

Reis, j'ai amé un tuen vassal;
Veez le ci: ceo est Lanval!
Acheisunez fu en ta curt.
Ne vuil mie qu'a mal li turt
De ceo qu'il dist, ceo saches tu,
Que la reïne ad tort eü:
Unkes nul jur ne la requist.
De la vantance ke il fist,
Si par mei peot estre aquitez,
Par voz baruns seit delivrez!
(615–24)

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[King, I loved one of your vassals. This is he, this is Lanval! He was arraigned in your court. I do not want him to suffer for what he allegedly said, for you must know that the queen was in the wrong: never once did he make amorous overtures to her. If he can be pardoned by me for the boast he made, then let him be released by your barons!]

Here, in a solemn intervention with juridical overtones, the other-worldly lady mediates the tensions between the two irreconcilable images of Lanval previously at issue before the deadlocked court.⁷¹ In her unsolicited testimony, the specular encounter reflects an authentic image of Lanval and restores it to the social context from which false judgment had alienated him. The schema here provides two types of self-perception: while confirming the hero's probity, it also confronts the court with the unsettling image of its potential for collective error.⁷² Moreover, it dramatizes a conflict with larger cultural implications, between two views of judgment: as the outcome of a trial based on formalized procedures, and as the product of a transcendental signification.⁷³ Lanval's acquittal, however, offers no optimistic affirmation of a theory of immanent justice; his final disappearance into the otherworld with his ethereal lady leaves us, as at the end of the other *lais* in the corpus, with a sense of love's vulnerability to the judgmental vagaries of men and institutions.⁷⁴ However, like its counterparts in the other poems that highlight a special relation, the solitary steed that spirits them away together is emblematic of love's reciprocity; it nonetheless hints darkly that the latter may indeed be exceptional, its viability extremely fragile, unless it be honored in the archives of memory, in a realm not of this world.

MEDIATORY DISCLOSURES OF IDENTITY: YONEC, MILUN,
LE FRESNE, AND ELIDUC

At least once in each of these four *lais*, the specular encounter plays host to a highly specialized mediatory revelation, involving disclosures concerning familial and lineal relations. Typically, this information dispels ignorance of parentage, kinship, or lineage that has hampered the conceptualization of an appropriate attitude or course of action. The beneficial disclosure reveals or clarifies a significant kinship or

spiritual affinity with one or more individuals, and in most instances sheds light on some important aspect of the addressee's personal identity.

Consider the concluding section of *Yonec*. On a feast day in Karlion, Yonec, his mother, and the noble lord he assumes to be his father are being shown through an abbey when they arrive at a magnificent tomb, aglow with shimmering candles in golden candelabra. Their question concerning this shrine elicits, not a name, but a eulogy. The tomb's occupant was “. . . le mieudre chevaliers / E li plus forz e li plus fiers, / Li plus beaus e li plus amez / Ki jamés seit el siecle nez. / De ceste tere ot esté reis . . .” (515–19) [the greatest knight, the strongest, bravest, the most handsome and beloved ever to be born. He had been king of that realm]. At the mention of a further detail – “A Carwent fu entrepris, / Pur l'amur d'une dame ocis” (521–22) [he was undone at Caerwent; slain for the love of a woman] – Yonec's mother suddenly realizes that the entombed monarch was her lover. Heeding his final injunction, she gives their son, along with the paternal sword of vengeance, the true account of his origins, a story familiar to the reader but not to the youth: “C'est vostre pere ki ci gist, / Que cist villarz a tort ocist. / Or vus comant e rent s'espee, / Jeo l'ai asez lung tens garde” (531–34) [Your father is the one who lies here, murdered by this old man. Now I confer upon you his sword; I've kept it as long as I should].

This denouement could well be entitled “At the Tomb of the Unknown Father,” where Yonec learns of his engenderment by a shapeshifting monarch who had appeared to his mother both as a magnificent bird and in human form. The revelation of the father is tantamount to filial empowerment as his father's avenger. *Yonec* illustrates a common pattern whereby medieval authors make recognition of the dead or previously absent father the object of powerful revelations to a privileged son.⁷⁵ Typically, the son grows up in ignorance of the father's identity and the true nature of his own lineage; after spending his early, formative years with his mother or some other representative of the nurturant feminine sphere, the youth makes a dramatic discovery that enlightens him with regard to the paternal legacy.⁷⁶ In this type of specular encounter, the informant may be either the father himself or, more frequently, someone who provides reliable

information about him. In this scene from *Yonec*, the schema is in fact doubled: the mother initially encounters her own story, which is also an evocation of the tale thus far, then tells her son the story of his patrilineal heritage.

The scene also mirrors earlier events in a tale featuring multiple specular encounters in successive anticipations of this double recognition. At the outset, this lady is already a *malmariée*, confined, like her counterpart in *Guigemar*, by a severe and jealous spouse and preoccupied with her lack of reciprocated love, as her daydreams of amatory idylls attest. Like Lanval, she is approached by a supernatural being who loves her exclusively.⁷⁷ Reciprocal love ensues – he becomes her “dru” (138; 226) – but only after he fulfills her one condition, to receive the sacraments as a mortal (137–44). He affirms his orthodoxy in a brief *credo* (150–54), and, to conceal his presence, proposes that “La semblance de vus prendrai, / Le cors Damedeu recevrai” (161–62) [I shall assume your likeness, and receive the body of Christ]. In so doing, he places her before a simulacrum of herself.⁷⁸ This implicit consecration of reciprocal love thus coincides with a literal, corporeal specular encounter, one that intensifies the notion of reciprocal lovers as doubles found elsewhere in the *Lais*, as in the depiction of the couples in *Guigemar* and *Lanval*.

Further instances of the schema ensue. The mortally wounded hawk-lover tells the lady that she will bear a son and prescribes how he will avenge them (319–32).⁷⁹ This proleptic use of the schema anticipating the encounter at the tomb precedes yet another, longer one. After she has followed him back to his realm, he commends his sword to her custody and foretells in detail the day she is to confer it upon their son:

Quant il serat creüz e granz
E chevaliers pruz e vaillanz,
A une feste u ele irra
Sun seigneur e lui amerra.
En une abbëie vendrunt;
Par une tumbe k'il verrunt
Orrunt renoveler sa mort
E cum il fu ocis a tort.
Ileoc li baillerat s'espeie.

Fictions of identity in medieval France

L'aventure li seit cuntee
Cum il fu nez, ki l'engendra:
Asez verrunt k'il en fera.
(425–36)

[When he was fully grown and had become a meritorious and courageous knight, she was to take him and her husband to the celebration of a feast day. They would arrive at an abbey; before a tomb they would visit they would hear an account of his wrongful death, whereupon she was to give him his father's sword. He was to be told the circumstances of his birth and who engendered him, and they would see what he would do about it.]

Mediating the couple's unhappy past and their future vindication, this reflexive prolepsis virtualizes in precise terms the scene at the tomb, so that the latter assumes the qualities of a ritualized enactment of a divine paternal mandate.

This remarkable reiteration of a specular encounter serves more than a scheme of deferred vengeance, however. Like the beleaguered and leaderless land awaiting its redeemer in grail narratives, this realm has long remained bereft of its monarch and eager that the prophesied successor arrive. Yonec's encounter with the story of his own engenderment and lineage enables him, on the threshold of adulthood, to enter the realm of the exalted father as its monarch.

Ultimately, however, his heroic individuation by means of a specular encounter is overshadowed by what in each of Marie's *lais* becomes the overriding concern: symbolic commemoration of reciprocal love. After the mother has expired in a paroxysm of grief and her son has exacted vengeance, the crucial gesture ensues: reuniting his parents in the tomb, he memorializes their reciprocal bond.⁸⁰ Their ornate tomb belongs among the other closing emblems of love's perdurable reciprocity in the *Lais*.

In terms of its overall design, *Milun* shows many similarities to *Yonec*. Like the latter, the story first depicts the couple's imperiled secret love affair and their eventual engenderment of a son out of wedlock; the hero discovers the paternal figure in a climactic specular encounter; and this moment is repeatedly anticipated by specular exchanges, beginning with two instances of proleptic counsel. In the first of these, the expectant mother, eager to conceal her child's birth, details at length

how her lover Milun is to take their newborn to be raised by her sister in Northumbria; once he is grown, she is to give him tokens of his identity – the father's ring and the mother's autobiographical letter (67–86).⁸¹ Because the mother's plan was implemented – “A sun *cunseil* se sunt tenu” (87) [They carried out her specifications] – these tokens both virtualize and defer the son's eventual discovery of his parentage.

While this proleptic counsel will direct the hero toward his father, the second prescribes a means of perpetuating the couple's secret love affair. Milun sends his *amie*, now in a marriage of convenience, a swan bearing a description of how to train it as a messenger: “Primes le face bien garder, / Puis si le laist tant jeüner / Treis jurs que il ne seit peüz; / Li briefs li seit al col penduz, / Laist l'en aler: il volera / La u il primes conversa” (241–46) [First she must see that it is well tended, then leave it unfed for three days. The letter is to be suspended from its neck; when she would release it, it would fly back to its first home]. This method allows them to arrange periodic encounters for two decades.⁸²

The son's eventual specular enlightenment concerning his parentage coincides with his knighting ceremony, when his aunt gives him the ring and letter, thus awakening his desire not only to find his father but also to equal the latter's surpassing chivalric renown. His quest for individuation on the paternal model earns him renown abroad, which ironically inspires his father to measure his prowess against this unknown countryman. When at last they finally meet, incognito, in a tournament, the son defeats his father, but this is overshadowed by their exchange of specular stories. Recognizing his opponent's ring, Milun demands his name and those of his parents, thus eliciting the crucial revelation. The son relates the contents of the mother's letter, recapitulates his childhood spent with his aunt, and expresses his intense desire to find his parents (445–66). In the quasi-Joycean fashion of a Bloom and a Daedalus, father and son have long sought one another and are thus related reciprocally, by the lack each feels for the other, as well as by their intense curiosity concerning kinship. The father replies in kind, confirming his paternity and telling of how, thanks to the swan-messenger, he has remained close to the youth's mother (471–74; 488–96). The specular stories exchanged by father and son retrospectively dissipate each other's zones of ignorance of what has gone before,

reconstituting *en abyme* the story's diegesis and locating therein their respective careers as two trajectories narrowing into convergence at the point of this reciprocal specular encounter.⁸³

As in *Yonec*, discovery of the paternal figure entails filial empowerment:

Li fiz respunt: "Par fei, bels pere,
Assemblerai vus e ma mere!
Sun seignur que ele ad ocirai
E espuser la vus ferai.
(497–500)

[The son replied: In faith, fair father, I shall reunite you and my mother. I shall slay her husband and have you marry her.]

In contrast with *Yonec*, murder of the unwanted spouse is averted here by his sudden death, and the parental couple are united *in vita*:

Sanz conseil de tute autre gent
Lur fiz amdeus les assembla,
La mere a sun pere dona.
(526–28)

[Taking counsel from no one, their son united the two of them, and gave his mother to his father.]

The sons in *Milun* and *Yonec* both illustrate the importance of discovering and, moreover, of uniting one's parents, whether or not they are still alive and regardless of conflicting matrimonial ties. The prestige of the father is a major concern in both, while in *Yonec*'s case this is magnified by the fact that his true father proves to be far more exalted than the man he had taken to be his father. The implicit fantasy doubly rewards the hero, on the one hand assigning him a martial and/or regal role worthy of his exalted biological father, on the other hand allowing him to assert his own parentage – become, as it were, a father figure on behalf of his own parents by arranging their reunion and thus according it a paternal kind of sanction. In so doing, moreover, the son shifts the final emphasis back to the reciprocally matched lovers, so that the filial image itself, along with that of the swan, serves as a memorable emblem of their union.⁸⁴

Like *Milun*, *Le Fresne* frames the story of the child's fortunes within a narrative concerning its parents. The child's biography spans its birth,

isolation from family in earliest infancy, maturation, thence to the point at which the child, now grown, is first recognized by the parent of the same sex. In fact, *Le Fresne* shares with both *Milun* and *Yonec* numerous similarities in overall morphology. Although many of Marie's *lais* bifurcate into two relatively independent intrigues that are in some way accessory to each other, these three separate the parents and one of their offspring into two narrative strands that ultimately converge in a climactic moment of specular encounter and recognition. In all three, the offspring's birth is concealed to avoid a public scandal; (s)/he grows up unaware of vital aspects of familial kinship; and (s)/he discovers this truth upon returning to the sphere of the parents, and then effects a positive commemoration of the parental union.⁸⁵

In addition, these three are the only *lais* in the collection that depict motherhood in detail; in each, the mother, despite major obstacles, directly influences the life of her child.⁸⁶ Yet only in *Le Fresne* does she determine so profoundly both the negative and the positive phases of her child's long odyssey of individuation, while many of the text's significant reflexive features crystallize around her. The tale of her calumny and its ultimate sanction frames *Le Fresne*'s story. At the very outset two cases of twinship – a doubling of reflexive identities – serve to emphasize her malice. Her assertion that the twin sons born to a neighbor are proof of multiple paternity sets their parents at odds.⁸⁷ Soon thereafter, however, when she herself bears twin daughters, she seeks to conceal their birth and even entertains recourse to infanticide for one of them.⁸⁸ Hence at the outset a moral tale of scandalmongering and its punishment.

The latter is nonetheless deferred by the story of the child she consigned to anonymity and abandonment.⁸⁹ Though not without sending her away, as did the mother in *Milun*, with tokens of identity: a length of striped brocade (*paile roé*) and a ring, items that in due course come full circle.⁹⁰ Meanwhile, the foundling's suppressed identity is gradually unveiled. Named *Le Fresne* for the ash tree where she was discovered, the child is raised by an abbess as her own niece and waxes in beauty and goodness. Her initial specular encounter occurs as she is about to leave the abbey with her *ami*, Gurun. The abbess gives her the cloth and ring and tells her how she had been found and raised (295–302).

Yet this is only a partial revelation. Her story, like that of Cinderella,

might well have ended upon her departure with her wealthy *ami*, had it not been for a troubling second instance of specular counsel. For Le Fresne's concubinage in Gurun's household prompts his vassals to advise him to forsake her in favor of a noble bride, La Codre.⁹¹ This specious argument is grounded in an onomastic opposition: "Pur le freisne que vus larrez / En échange le codre avrez; / En la codre ad noiz e deduiz, / Li freisnes ne porte unke fruiz!" (337–40) [In exchange for forsaking the ash you'll have the hazel; while the hazel yields nuts and delights, the ash bears no fruit]. Here the story metamorphoses into a tale of twinship as difference, marked onomastically as a distinction between species of trees.⁹²

The twins' biological specularity remains unnoticed until the occasion of Gurun's marriage to La Codre, as Le Fresne, without bitterness or remorse, participates in the preparations. Recognition occurs when the mother's gaze falls upon the ring and the brocade Le Fresne has generously left for the newlyweds. These objects are doubly reminiscent, of her long-lost daughter and of the fact that her own suitor – and future husband – had given them to her long ago. As with Milun and his son, recognition by token fosters an exchange of specular stories that together comprise complementary analepses: Le Fresne recounts the events following her abandonment (436–40), then, as her mother confesses to her father (467–84), she finds in the maternal mirror the circumstances of her birth and twinship, as well as her rightful place within the familial constellation: "La meschine mut s'esjoï / De l'aventure k'ele oi" (491–2) [The young woman was overjoyed by the story she heard]. The mother, meanwhile, reciprocates her spouse's gift of ring and cloth, presenting him with the daughter she had deprived of his fatherhood, yet whose gift, which she in turn had given, had guaranteed the recognition of their child. Hence the specularity of gift and counter-gift.⁹³ This scene consolidates the nuclear family and ensures both daughters auspicious marriages and a share of the patrimony. Thus the end positively mirrors the beginning, where familial kinship was undervalued through misconstrual of twinning as the product of multiple paternity.⁹⁴ In this respect the crucial recognition is that of the mother, from whom it elicits profound contrition and a new, zealously familial orientation, one conspicuously ratified by ecclesiastical authority, in the person of the archbishop of Dol. Le Fresne's life is

thus enclosed in the fictive folds of the mother's alienation and eventual reintegration of her lost offspring.

Once again, however, the issue of individuation is accessory to the ultimate emphasis on amatory reciprocity, as cloth and ring commemorate the parental bond of reciprocal love at its very inception.⁹⁵ For Le Fresne, as well, a marriage based on mutual love is the most significant result of her specular encounter with her mother, while the annulment of La Codre's marriage of convenience in favor of her sister privileges conjugal reciprocity based on affective inclination.

Although *Eliduc*, the final *lai* in the collection, contrasts markedly with its predecessors in terms of length (1184 verses) and complexity, scholars have cited many reflexive elements that serve to integrate it extensively into the rest of the collection.⁹⁶ Also fundamental in this regard are the numerous instances of specular encounter that are typical of its usage elsewhere in the *Lais*. Early in the story it supports two instances of counsel, once when English strategists provide Eliduc with a plan for an ambush (173–84), again when Guilliadun, the daughter of a king in England, receives advice from her valet concerning her awakening love for Eliduc (355–64).⁹⁷ It also occurs far more prominently near the end of the story where, as in the other *lais* in this subset, it serves to disclose kinship, as the two women who love Eliduc exchange stories, thus merging the two principal strands of the narrative. *Eliduc* is nonetheless unique in that revelation of kinship and full recognition are not coterminous. Instead, a series of specular encounters culminates in a new kind of synthesis unprecedented within the collection.

Prior to this chain of discoveries, Eliduc has navigated back and forth between two worlds that are virtual mirror-images of one another, though always taking care never to pull aside the curtain suspended between them. He has striven to compartmentalize opposing military spheres and emotional engagements, shuttling dutifully between Brittany and Britain, between Guildeluëc and Guilliadun, yet without ever taking decisive measures to resolve the growing conflict between the reciprocal love – the *druërie* (328; 435; 542; 579) – that *Amur* had suddenly kindled between himself and Guilliadun, and his prior marriage and repeated vows of fidelity – his *fei* (84 *et passim*) – to Guildeluëc.⁹⁸ In consequence, throughout most of the story the two

women are doubly related, by the bond of love each feels for the same man, and by their common ignorance of one another's existence.⁹⁹ Despite the hero's irresolution in dealing with this conflict, the opposing spheres are gradually reconciled, by fortuitous circumstances that produce a cascade of specular encounters.

This begins with a revelation elicited by terror at sea. Eliduc is returning to Brittany with Guilliadun, who is still unaware that he is married. During a violent storm, a sailor upbraids Eliduc in her presence for provoking divine wrath by bringing her with him when he is already married (830–40). The sailor's outburst shreds the veil of Eliduc's duplicity, while inadvertently placing Guilliadun before the mirror of her awkward circumstances.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, Eliduc is now reminded of precisely the one commitment he has repeatedly failed to honor, the conjugal fidelity, or *fei*, he vowed to Guildeluëc before he first departed for Britain: "Mes il l'aseürat de sei / Qu'il li porterat *bone fei*" (83–84) [But he promised her his steadfast faithfulness]. Thereafter, *fei* had subsequently recurred as a leitmotif, and had even begun to weigh upon his own conscience – "De sa femme li remembra / E cum il li asseüra / Que *bone fei* li portereit / E læument se cuntendreit" (323–26; cf. 477; 739) [He remembered his wife, and how he had assured her that he would remain faithful to her and abide in loyalty] – but not until this stinging indictment of his fourfold transgression, against God, the law, rectitude, and his solemn promise – his *fei* – does he act. When the news of this scandal plunges Guilliadun into a deep swoon that all on board take to be her demise, Eliduc, previously governed by *amour-passion*, now vastly compounds his transgressions, yielding to homicidal rage, killing the sailor with an oar and casting his body overboard. This homicidal denial of the specular message is unique in the *Lais*.

At landfall, Eliduc bears Guilliadun's inert body to a hermit's chapel and resolves to leave it on the altar until he can found an abbey and enter a monastic order in expiation of his sins. In effect, he returns to his old ways, moving from Guildeluëc to Guilliadun and back, on daily pilgrimages between home and altar; this replication in miniature of his previous voyages from Brittany to Britain is an apt symbol of his moral recidivism. His wife eventually discovers the body on the altar and intuits the truth. As she selflessly mourns the other woman's death, a

weasel emerges from under the altar; when it passes across the body, her valet fells it with a “bastun” and casts it aside. A second weasel appears and, with an evident display of grief, procures a crimson flower – reminiscent of the rosy-visaged virgin on the altar (1012) – and revives its companion by placing the flower between its teeth. Hence a symbolic, retro-prospective enactment of the surrounding narrative, recalling Eliduc’s homicide and Guilliadun’s cataleptic swoon, while also anticipating, indeed prescribing, the gestures necessary for reanimation of the female figure unconscious on the altar.¹⁰¹ For Guildeluëc, this nonverbal specular encounter discloses the homeopathic gesture she must make in order to restore Guilliadun to consciousness.

The weasels emblemize a larger tale of sin and redemption, one whose climax begins with the awakening at the altar and ushers in a dramatic, double specular encounter. Coming to her senses, Guilliadun utters an exclamation reminiscent of the foolish virgins of semiliturgical drama – “Deus, fet ele, tant ai dormi!” (1066) [God, said she, I’ve slept so long!]¹⁰² – then launches into an autobiographical account of her relationship with Eliduc (1071–84). Mixing autobiography, confession, and lamentation, and concluding with an invective sententia – “Mut est fole ki humme creit!” (1084) [A woman is a fool to trust a man!] – this effusion is itself suggestive of a *lai*, in the sense of the genre repeatedly evoked by Marie in the exordia and epilogues of her collection: an autonomous, lyrico-narrative *remembrance* – the “Lay of Guilliadun,” as it were.¹⁰³ Likewise, the response she hears could in the same sense be seen as the “Lay of Guildeluëc,” a joyful and optimistic outpouring that dissipates the plaintive and dolorous strains of Guilliadun’s lament. Ever selflessly, Guildeluëc first tells how Eliduc too has suffered, on account of his love for the disconsolate maiden (1085–90). Of her own plight she details only her dismay with his evident pain and the joy she now feels in having found that its corporeal source is still alive (1091–98). In recognition of their reciprocal love, finally, she will sacrifice her marriage, bring them together, forgive Eliduc, and retire from the world: “Ensemble od mei vus enmerrai / E a vostre ami vus rendrai; / Del tut le voil quite clamer / E si ferai mun chief veler” (1099–102) [I shall take you along with me and return you to your lover, whom I wish to release from his bond to me, and then I shall take the veil].

Each of these two autobiographical accounts specularizes its addressee; together they unmask the two faces of Eliduc and allow each woman, for the first time, to situate herself with respect to his heretofore hidden double game: in the "Lay of Guilliadun," Guildeluëc finds her own role of deceived wife; in the "Lay of Guildeluëc," Guilliadun learns of Eliduc's remorse and abiding love for her. This "antiphonal" exchange of "lays" creates a striking inverse symmetry: axiologically, the two stories are diametrically opposed, the one telling of *fin'amor* betrayed and placing Eliduc in the role of traitor, the other displaying boundless, unselfish understanding born of an "amor" of a higher order. Yet in this opposition of the foolish and the wise, there is an instructive contrast, between the abject and self-concerned lamentations of Guilliadun for having wasted her days in foolish dalliance, and the serenity of Guildeluëc as she vows to enter the cloister, making way for the bridegroom.

Yet *Eliduc* is no secular *Sponsus*, no eschatological parable of foolish and wise women. In her final story, Marie de France avoids reducing the *lai* as she conceives of it to a simplistic moral tale founded on a strict opposition of the worldly and the spiritual. Moving beyond such a monological stasis, she remains faithful to her concern in each of the previous *lais* with the qualities and nuances of reciprocal relations. Significantly, she doubles a motif apparent at the end of both *Yonec* and *Milun*, the gesture of supreme generosity whereby the exemplars of amatory reciprocity are – perhaps not unlike this assemblage of *lais* – "assembled": "Ensemble od mei vus enmerrai / E a vostre ami vus rendrai" (1099–100) [I shall take you with me and return you to your lover]. The marriage of Eliduc and Guilliadun consecrates this reciprocity: "Mut ot entre eus *parfite amur*" (1150) [The two of them shared love to perfection]. Guildeluëc, meanwhile, retires from the world. At this point, the story has reached the characteristic conclusion of its predecessors, with a couple in definitive reciprocity with respect to a marginalized third party.

The final *lai* moves significantly beyond that conventional juncture, however. After Guildeluëc initiates the progressive recognition of a higher form of reciprocal love by retreating from the world, the couple eventually evolve toward a supraconjugal spirituality: "Granz aumoines e granz biens firent, / Tant que a Deu se cunvertirent" (1151–52) [They

bestowed great alms and gifts until they at last consecrated themselves wholly unto God]. Time is telescoped to allow us to see how the couple's spiritual conversion culminates in a repetition of the gesture of "assemblage," as, bringing to a close their conjugal life, Eliduc in his turn "gives" Guilliadun to Guildeluëc – "Ensemble od sa femme premiere / Mist sa femme que tant ot chiere" (1165–66) [With his first wife he placed the woman he cherished so dearly] – who welcomes her as a sister.¹⁰⁴ This twofold, ritualized *mise ensemble* culminates, finally, in the retrospective evocation of "l'aventure de ces treis" (1181) [the story of these three], whereby, for the first and only time in the entire collection, love is configured according to a three-way relationship of reciprocity.¹⁰⁵ Hence a new emphasis, whereby identity is considerably less important as a product of lineal relations than as part of a larger network of affinities. The new consciousness of selfhood stemming from these successive encounters leads to profound ties of spiritual kinship. While this shift of emphasis brings the *lai* itself to an intrinsically appropriate close, it also has important implications with regard to the significance of the larger ensemble. For *Eliduc* is clearly not an anomaly in the *Lais*, and it has been argued that it was deliberately placed last in the Harley manuscript in order to provide a degree of closure for the entire textual ensemble.

NARRATIVE ORGANIZATION AND RECIPROCITY IN THE LAIS

How, then, might we perceive this collection as a unified "assemblage"? The remarkable similarities among the various occurrences of specular encounter in the *Lais* and the fact that they are consistently accessory to the same type of resolution in each story suggest that our schema is in some way a common denominator and unifying element throughout, and perhaps also an essential part of some comprehensive *sens*. We shall now entertain these possibilities in terms of the type of narrative organization to which the specular encounter is functionally complementary in each of the *lais*, one which, in an earlier study, I have suggested conforms to a paradigm of "triadic structure."¹⁰⁶

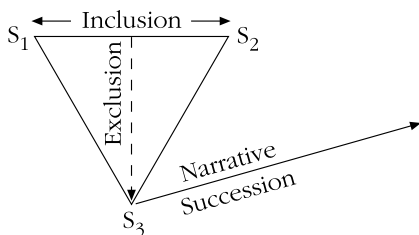
A fundamentally "dyadic" relation among characters is common to many brief forms of medieval narrative. In such cases – frequently in fables, in the *exemplum*, the fabliau, in the plots of countless farces, and

in numerous episodes of the *Roman de Renart* – two subjects are locked into an antagonistic rivalry of “have” versus “have not,” whereby something in the possession of one of them is felt as a lack by the other. The narrative development ensuing from the desire to possess this object often involves a virtually endless alternation of roles; as the new possessor of the object is rendered passive, the one dispossessed is reactivated by the loss and lack that renew desire. Hence a fundamental structure of exchange in which mutual antagonism is organized around a single object. The fox and the crow, Renart and Isengrin, the boy and the blind man, Pathelin and the clothier, all are related by such a mechanism. Dyadic narrative frequently involves nothing more than repeated exchanges – both of an object and of the two roles constituted by it – as in the “deceiver deceived” formula.¹⁰⁷ Such dyadic interplay does not invariably culminate in the satisfaction of both parties: sometimes the potential remains for a renewal of the rivalry, hence the possibility for cyclic development, as in the so-called “trickster cycles” or certain branches of the *Roman de Renart*.¹⁰⁸

Although dyadic narrative was by no means an invention of the Middle Ages, its prominence in brief forms of medieval story attests to the persistence and longevity of popular traditions readily adaptable to the cultural “attire” of a given period. Yet it offers only the most elementary form of object-exchange, often involving a tangible item of modest value and ignoble motives for acquiring it. Although the typically redundant exchanges and superficiality of human relations can be lively, they are ultimately of limited interest in contrast with more complex stories involving multiple objects of exchange and intricate patterns of social interaction. The accelerated economic and social diversification of Western Europe from the late twelfth century and the proliferation of new mechanisms for exchanging goods and services may well have fostered an interest in narratives attentive to more complicated forms of human interaction. Such would seem to be the case in the *Lais* of Marie de France, where, perhaps in response to the tastes of a more sophisticated, “courtly” public, greater emphasis is placed on intangibles, and social interaction is less often based exclusively on exchanges of material objects. Of new and particular interest are the *qualities*, both positive and negative, of the “intersubjective” relations among the major characters.

The specular encounter in fictions of reciprocity

Like dyadic narratives, however, these relations also conform to a relatively simple narrative model, one that could be broadly characterized as *triadic*. As opposed to the dyadic give-and-take between two antagonists who covet the same object, Marie's *Lais* typically relate two individuals positively while excluding a third:



Here we have what could be called an “intersubjective” model, in that it provides an abstract representation of the respective roles of three narrative actors, or “subjects,” according to their positions relative to one another: Subject 1 (S_1) and subject 2 (S_2) are in a relation of inclusion at the summit of the triad, while subject 3 (S_3) is in some way excluded from this relationship. This static condition of “two versus one” acquires narrative momentum from the excluded third subject, which characteristically becomes the nucleus of a new triad.¹⁰⁹ The narrative typically progresses from one triad to the next as the actor occupying position S_3 assumes that of S_1 in the next triadic module.¹¹⁰ A dialectic progression based on a series of excluded third terms is thus instituted. While many analyses of narrative organization in texts emplot a succession of “functions,”¹¹¹ analysis of intersubjective developments shows primarily the aspect of narrativity that is the *product* of functions: the successive relations among subjects.¹¹² This is an important aspect of narrative organization in the *Lais*. Moreover, in each of the twelve texts in the collection, its operations consistently involve the specular encounter. In each *lai*, intersubjective relations develop with remarkable consistency according to a limited number of tendencies. Initially, some type of *exclusion* serves to establish narrative momentum in the initial triad. The outset of each of the stories involves an exclusion that creates a material lack or, more frequently, an affective deficit that mobilizes the narrative. When one of the three subjects is excluded from the initial triad, the story progresses dialectically

through a series of from one to five additional triads, each of which normally crystallizes around the excluded third subject in the preceding group. This triadic succession is never an open-ended, potentially interminable process, however; it inevitably culminates in a final stasis reciprocally relating two of the three subjects.

In the Appendix, the diagrammatical sketches show the consistency with which triadic succession occurs throughout the *Lais*. To represent an implied or manifest rivalry between husband and lover extant at the outset of a story, as in *Equitan*, *Bisclavret*, *Yonec*, *Laüstic*, and *Chievrefoil*, the initial triad in these instances reflects the exclusion of the lover presupposed *a priori* by the marriage. Other forces also initiate narrative succession, as we see from the various opening conflicts in *Le Fresne*, *Milun*, and *Eliduc*. Whatever the catalyst, these triads continue throughout according to the same principle. Although dyadic narrative may also involve triads, the third term is typically either an inert object or a human being treated largely as an object (e.g., in the fabliaux, the naive rustic; the dull-witted consumer; the cuckolded husband; and so forth), and such objects are valorized intrinsically as part and parcel of transactions and are often the cause of rivalry and antagonism between subjects. In contrast, Marie's triadic forms tend to configure the third term in greater human depth. While an inert object or a stereotypical character is typically desired or exchanged because of the values constituted outside itself, a human subject can be depicted as actively entering into the process of desire and exchange by virtue of its cognitive capabilities, to formulate values and act in accordance with them.

Although the frequent triangulation of husband, lover, and lady in the *Lais* is reminiscent of dyadic narrative in the fabliaux, here mere possession of the object of rivalry is overshadowed by a dominant concern with the *quality*, whether positive or negative, of a reciprocal relationship. Rivalry results not from an ephemeral wish for gain or immediate sexual gratification, but from profoundly subjective and affective factors that are constitutive of an intersubjective bond between two individuals. The type of reciprocity emphasized thus varies from one poem to another, yet there is a tendency to round out each *lai* by highlighting objects to which particular significance is attached, not as ends in themselves, but rather as qualitative indices of the reciprocal bond.

The specular encounter in fictions of reciprocity

The closing configurations of reciprocity are often tributary in some way to the theme of love, which undergoes nuanced exploration in many different settings, from the exaltation of heterosexual love in the opening poem of the collection to the final idealization of an ascetic transcendence. In *Equitan* we discover the dark side of reciprocity based on a reprehensible and destructive passion, while *Chaitivel* and *Deus Amanz* illustrate the nefarious potential for love's distortion by vanity or selfishness. *Bisclavret* makes amatory conflict tributary to establishment of a male feudal bond with sociopolitical overtones; nor is the union of mortal and supernatural beings in *Launval* devoid of implications with regard to feudal customs and juridical procedures. *Yonec*, *Milun*, and *Le Fresne* reflect variously on love and the family at the contentious crossroads of desire and duty, while also exploring contradictions between biological and social identity. Of course the final equilibrium created by this privileged union could in some cases have offered potential for further development. For example, although Guigemar has slain Meriadus, the jealous husband survives; Iseut must leave Tristan and return to her husband; the frustrated wife in *Laüstic* remains with hers. What will the lady and the fourth knight do after the *lai* of *Chaitivel* is sung? What will become of the seneschal now that he has murdered Equitan and his perfidious paramour? And what nefarious tales might be told of the female offspring of Bisclavret's betrayers, all marked with the stigma of noselessness on account of their forebears' transgression? Such unresolved issues notwithstanding, these stories all achieve the sense of an ending in the final triad.

TRIADIC NARRATIVE AND SPECULAR ENCOUNTER

In the *Lais*, then, one basic narrative pattern prevails throughout, whereby each story unfolds through successive triads constructed on the dialectic of the excluded third term, until in the final triad intersubjective reciprocity is achieved and symbolically signified as in some way definitive. Of what significance is this ubiquitous pattern? Although by no means exclusive to Marie's *Lais*, it rarely develops with such consistency elsewhere.¹¹³ Moreover, only in Marie's *Lais* do we find, without exception, coordination of triadic succession with a closing configuration based on intersubjective reciprocity, and only in

the *Lais* is the specular encounter always the essential accessory to this type of closure. This sense that the twelve *lais* in Harley 978 cohere as a homogeneous ensemble is intensified by the final reciprocal bond that develops at the end of each one and is characteristically signified by symbolic objects that neutralize the story's previous vacillation between the *pair* and the *impair* of three versus two and valorize that fundamental relation of inclusion toward which the story has been building. Their prominence near the end of the story makes these objects salient and memorable. We find tokens of recognition, like the belt and knotted shirt in *Guigemar*, or the ring and ornate cloth in *Le Fresne*. Or they may be symbols of an ultimate function, like the steed that spirits Lanval away with his lady; or the perennial flowers fed by the unconsumed potion spilled on the hillside in *Deus Amanz*; the gilded coffer enshrining the nightingale enveloped in the embroidered message; even the single receptacle in which both the king and the seneschal's wife were scalded. In *Yonec* and *Milun* reciprocity is symbolized by an offspring, in *Bisclavret* by the hunt that relates culture and nature, king and creature on a positive basis; in *Chaitivel* by the singular title itself, "Chaitivel," as an alternative to "Les Quatre Dols"; in *Chievrefoil* by the intertwining of hazel and honeysuckle; and in the final poem by emblems of the spiritual retreats in which Eliduc and his two wives become at one with God. The principle of triadic succession strives to reduce three into two, but in the final *lai* it ultimately integrates the three terms into an exemplary kind of unity.

What does this relationship between specular encounter and closure recurrent in each *lai* tell us about Marie as narrative poet? The synergistic integration of these two features into the same type of narrative dynamic is a hallmark of her art of composition. Commenting on the importance of "triangular" relationships among the characters in the *Lais*, Douglas Kelly focuses on only one type of triad, observing that "all the lays contain a lover's triangle, or a variant of that triangle."¹⁴ He nonetheless finds "the same fundamental scheme" (115) throughout, although in each *lai* "the three parties to each triangle vary both in their attributes and in the moral or social evaluation of those attributes" (115). This variability would stem from Marie's concern with maintaining diversity of content by beginning each *lai* differently – "diversement . . . cumencier," as she puts it in the prologue to *Milun* (2). Kelly

contrasts the pronounced tendency toward triangular emplotment with the way in which each *lai* develops from unique circumstantial *topoi*, so that “the narrative, the *reisun*, is played out in diverse ways, according to the diverse topical evaluation of the characters proposed by the author at the outset” (“‘Diversement cumencier,’” 114).¹¹⁵

Yet the topical diversity of the beginnings could just as readily have been elaborated according to a dyadic narrative scheme. Why is the criterion of diversity tributary to intersubjective *triangles*? While Kelly suggests that Marie’s recourse to triangles in particular results from “the importance of jealousy” (113), the latter, as we have seen, is only one of many subjective factors that may motivate the excluded figure’s move toward a compensatory relationship constitutive of a new triad. For example, fear, not jealousy, compels Bisclavret’s wife to align herself with a suitor; or again, love and compassion, not jealousy, move Gueldeluc to create an emotional and spiritual alliance with Guiliadun. This variability of motivation offers a hint as to why Marie shows an unwavering predilection for triadic intersubjectivity: the move from dyadic rivalry over a material object to the depiction of three beings in a triad replaces an inert “thing” with a cognitive being endowed with thoughts and values, as we have seen; hence the far greater potential for creating *qualitative, ethical contrasts* in each and every triad in the unfolding story, between the various two-person reciprocal relationships that develop and the figure excluded therefrom. Each triad embodies both a given type of reciprocal relation as well as its contrary, represented by the third term, thus providing an intrinsic evaluation of successive types of reciprocity. In this way, triadic emplotment of narrative achieves a dialectical movement through the story, whereby one adversative structure of assertion and refutation leads dialectically to another, in a manner akin to formal debate, until an ultimate reciprocity is asserted and valorized positively. While Marie indeed begins each *lai* diversely, in keeping with the classical rhetorical scheme of the “*circumstaniae*, the specific questions that must be asked of a given case in order to formulate an argument about it,”¹¹⁶ triadic narrative affords her an ideal format for elaborating her stories on a consistently ethical basis, taking the argument of the circumstantially unique case presented in each *lai* and working it through dialectically toward a closing judgment.

While these triadic narratives move dialectically toward an exemplary closure, the chief accessory of this ethical dynamic is the specular encounter, which consistently provides a discursive reorientation in the midst of the unfolding story. In essence, triadic narrative and the specular nexus are in a symbiotic relationship of *telos* to *logos*: we have seen how a specially valorized reciprocity marks the end-point of the *telos*, or dynamic orientation, of triadic narrative. At the crucial nexus where the specular encounter occurs, a vital new *orientation toward* that final reciprocity is provided by the *logos*, or discourse, of the informant. While the specular encounter thus specifies the cognitive “address,” as it were – the correct orientation toward reciprocity – triadic narrative supplies the dynamic means for ultimately attaining it. Consequently, the symbolic stasis marking the end-point of triadic succession is the logical outcome of the disclosures in the specular encounter. Thus, in the highly normative conceptualization of narrative apparent in the *Lais*, the specular encounter is the one cognitively charged locus essential to conditioning its end.

With regard to the comprehensive dimensions of the *lai*, the specular encounter consistently mediates the two main segments of the narrative. After the principal conflict has been fully developed over the course of the first segment, the specular schema occurs at the locus where the conflict comes to full prominence and the way it can be resolved is specified, after which the second segment brings this about, either immediately or in gradual phases. The conflict that takes shape in the first segment occasions a crisis that brings awareness of some problem or insufficiency; the pivotal moment in that crisis is the specular encounter, which mediates an awareness of the conflict and the determination of a means of resolving it. Marie’s conceptualization of the narrative *lai* thus conforms to what I have elsewhere called a “textuality of crisis,” whereby the two components of an essentially bipartite narrative are related through an intermediary crisis, so that the second segment stands as a corrective to the first.¹¹⁷

That Marie’s *Lais* adhere to crisis textuality reveals their kinship with many other medieval narratives that display variants of the same organizational paradigm. The dialectical progression from conflict to crisis to resolution is also suggestive of the tendency among medieval clerical authors to construct narratives according to modes of thought

imparted by formal training in the arts of the trivium.¹¹⁸ However, unlike other contemporary works that develop the textuality of crisis more symmetrically by placing the crisis at or near the numerical center of the poem – as in certain of Chrétien’s romances or *Le Bel Inconnu*, texts that will be examined in the next chapter – the bipartite segments in Marie’s *Lais* vary considerably in terms of length. In some cases, for example in *Le Fresne*, *Yonec* and *Eliduc*, the development of the crisis in the first segment of the bipartition occupies the better part of the story, while the ensuing specular encounter and closure may be relatively brief and punctual, and in some cases also contiguous. Elsewhere, as in *Guigemar*, the onset of the crisis may occur quite early while its resolution is protracted through various stages.¹¹⁹ This variability not only demonstrates the elasticity of crisis textuality; it also emphasizes that the length of its principal components and overall shape are not necessarily constrained by numerical or symmetrical schemes, but rather by the requirements for making a fundamentally ethical contrast of problem and resolution as these are mediated by a crisis.

RECIPROCITY AND TRANSTEXTUAL DESIGN

The prominence of crisis textuality offers yet another type of evidence that the twelve *lais* in Harley 978 cohere as an ensemble on the basis of narrative and discursive properties they all display. Consideration of the various kinds of closing reciprocal relations now suggests another organizational rationale of “assemblage”: it in fact allows us to identify three distinct varieties of plot that, in view of their respective characteristics, could be identified as *Courthy*, *Comic*, and *Elegiac*. The first three *lais* illustrate each one in turn:

- 1 *The Courthy Plot*: *Guigemar* incorporates the courtly type of plot, also illustrated by *Lanval* and *Chievrefoil*, in which a couple is ultimately valorized positively in a reciprocal relationship outside of marriage. A prototype of the courtly plot is the story of Tristan and Iseut explicitly evoked by *Chievrefoil*. The *lais* in this category offer three variant endings: the couple in *Guigemar* are reunited in the “real” world of feudal reality; the couple in *Lanval* leave society for the otherworld;

Tristan and the queen meet only intermittently, while one resides at court, the other in exile. All three nonetheless culminate in an essentially positive representation of reciprocal love.

- 2 *The Elegiac Plot*: This is the antitype of the courtly plot: the reciprocity relating the couple results from or involves unfortunate or destructive circumstances. While maintaining the pattern of closure based on a special relation of reciprocity anticipated by the specular encounter, these *lais* ultimately emphasize some kind of separation: the couple may unite only in death (*Equitan*, *Deus Amanz*); be disjoined (*Bisclavret*); or their symbolic union may contrast with circumstances that prevent their being together (*Laüstic*, *Chaitivel*). To designate the *lais* in this set, “elegiac” is a more appropriate characterization than “tragic,” given the instructive or exemplary closing reciprocity that in each instance symbolically mitigates the tragic aspects of the denouement.
- 3 *The Comic Plot*: This type of plot incorporates an argument with a positive outcome.¹²⁰ The action culminates in the displacement of a negative situation to the benefit of the protagonist. The four *lais* having this “comic” type of denouement also feature the motif of *la mise ensemble*, or “assemblage,” whereby an enlightened protagonist brings a couple together or otherwise facilitates their reunion. The familial constellation thereby constituted is either biological, as in *Le Fresne*, *Yonec*, and *Milun*, or spiritual, as in *Eliduc*. The *lais* in this category thus emphasize lineage or spiritual kinship, and the protagonist’s enlightenment coincides with exaltation of a reciprocal relation either from the lineal past, the generation of the forebears, or within a contemporaneous network of affective and spiritual affinities.

The fact that these twelve fictions of reciprocity incorporate three different types of intrigue suggests the possibility that, apart from an explicit concern with maintaining the thematic uniqueness and descriptive diversity of each *lai*, some effort was also made to achieve qualitative distinctions among *groups of lais* in the corpus, according to the positive or negative denouements of *lais* featuring couples, as well as between these and the *lais* commemorating ties of kinship. As for their distribution in the collection as a whole, none of these three types is ever repeated twice in sequence; a move from one *lai* to the next also consistently entails a change of category:

The specular encounter in fictions of reciprocity

Courtly plot
(couple +)

Comic plot
(kinship group)

Elegiac plot
(couple –)

I. *Guigemar*

2. *Equitan*

3. *Le Fresne*

4. *Bisclavret*

5. *Lanval*

6. *Deus Amanz*

7. *Yonec*

8. *Laiistic*

9. *Milun*

10. *Chaitivel*

II. *Chievrefoil*

12. *Eliduc*

From the very outset, the alternating rhythm of movement from one category to another is consistent and optimizes the potential for creating instructive contrasts among *lais*. There is some evidence that the disposition of the first three *lais* was deliberate.¹²¹ A major consequence of this ordering is the introduction of all three types of intrigue at the outset of the collection.

When we look at the *Lais* from this comprehensive perspective, we perceive an ensemble with an introductory component featuring *Guigemar*, in which the problematic of reciprocity is initially set forth, after which, in the main body of the collection (*lais* two through eleven), it is explored in terms of a number of significantly contrastive cases in a dialectical rhythm that culminates in the memorable synthesis offered by *Eliduc*. Hence:

I. Introduction: In *Guigemar* the principle of reciprocity is thematized in terms of reciprocal love and illustrated in a threefold succession of specular encounters; the *quality* of this relationship is upheld against various impingements, whether emotional, marital, or coercive.

II. Exposition: The following ten *lais* explore the principle of reciprocity dialectically, in contrastive pairings, whereby a *lai* from the even-numbered series representing the Elegiac Plot (2, 4, 6, 8, or 10) precedes another representing either the Courtly or the Comic Plot, thus

creating a series of contrasts between an “elegiac” denouement illustrating instances of negatively marked reciprocity, and either a “courtly” or a “comic” denouement featuring various relations based on positive reciprocity:

Equitan–Le Fresne: *Lais* two and three contrast diametrically opposed types of women, on the one hand the conniving and unscrupulous wife of the senechal, on the other Le Fresne, the steadfastly selfless counterpart of a Griselda. In *Equitan*, the lovers are reciprocally related by their common adherence to the homicidal conspiracy and perceive no moral obstacle to the satisfaction of passion, regardless of the political and moral transgressions this entails. In *Le Fresne*, on the other hand, reciprocal love notwithstanding, both Gurun and Le Fresne sacrifice their amatory seclusion to the sociopolitical imperative of providing a noble heir, while Le Fresne in particular displays extraordinary generosity and a selflessness that offers an instructive contrast to the murderous scheming of Equitan’s adulterous mistress.

Bisclavret–Lanval: *Lais* four and five are the only ones that offer more than a fleeting glimpse of a royal court. Significantly, the featured relation of reciprocity in *Bisclavret* binds king and beast, and the court is far more positively portrayed than in *Lanval*. The principal contrast is between the two couples, however. Bisclavret’s wife selfishly betrays both her spouse and the scandalous secret she shares with him, while attempting to sacrifice him in the process, while Lanval’s fairy-mistress places her love for him above his betrayal of the secret that bound them, by ultimately refusing to sacrifice him to the verdict of the court. The instructive opposition is thus between the two secret-sharers, and concerns constancy and the transgression or non-transgression of vows exchanged by a couple.

Deus Amanz–Yonec: In *lais* six and seven the ultimate reciprocity of the love relation is emblemized in the closing ritual of entombment: *Deus Amanz*: “Sarcu de marbre firent quere, / Les deus enfanz unt mis dedenz” (246–47) [They sent for a marble coffin and placed the two youths therein]; *Yonec*: “A grant honur la dame unt prise / E el sarcu posee e mise / Delez le cors de sun ami” (549–51) [With great honor they took the lady and placed her in

the coffin beside the body of her lover]. Linked by the motif of common burial, reminiscent of the legend of Tristan and Iseut, the two couples are also associated by the fact that they both resort to ultimately abortive deceptive stratagems in an attempt to overcome the authority figure (possessive father or jealous husband) who is an obstacle to their happiness. These resemblances serve to make the instructive religious contrast between the two couples all the more apparent. Whereas in *Deus Amanz* the young lovers' recourse to the ruse of a potion partakes of folklore and magic, and the youth's failure to consume the draught underlines his prideful excess, the parents of Yonec begin their affair by receiving the sacraments, and their story, detailing a prophecy and the advent of a "redeemer," is frequently evocative of biblical parallels. Thus, while the "elegiac" entombment in *Deus Amanz* commemorates a reciprocity marked by a major intrinsic flaw, the interment of Yonec's parents in a cloistral decor assumes overtones of Christian allegory.¹²²

Laüstic–Milun: *Lais* eight and nine are the only two in the collection in which the lovers, separated by moral and material obstacles, resort to communication through the mediation of a fowl. In *Laüstic*, significantly, the nightingale is a nocturnal singer, but by the time it becomes a communicator it has already been killed and sealed into a reliquary commemorating the couple's lost nocturnal joys, brought to an abrupt end by a combination of deceit, mendacity, and cruelly vindictive violence. By contrast, in *Milun* the swan is a diurnal figure of ravenous vitality, a powerful voyager, and an emblem of lovers who are reminiscent of Le Fresne and Gurun: they practice moderation in the face of grave sociopolitical impingements on their happiness, the lady accepting, and Milun acquiescing to, a marriage of convenience. Yet despite such obstacles, their perdurable love and their collaborative efforts to protect their infant and ensure his future ultimately reward their constancy.

Chaitivel–Chievrefoil: In *lais* ten and eleven, it is the handicapped male protagonist, either injured or exiled, whose ingenuity serves the principal objective of commemorating the reciprocal relation. In *Chaitivel*, the wounded and impotent lover produces an efficacious argument that makes the *lai*'s modified title an emblem

of his love for its inventor. Although there is reciprocity in the lady's eventual assent to his proposal, the title they agree upon emphasizes precisely the negative aspect of their relationship. In addition, both express a considerable degree of self-concern; she vainly rues the suitors she has lost, he the loss of his virility. In *Chievrefoil*, Tristram overcomes banishment by means of his complex stratagem for communicating with the queen. Although their love is potentially vulnerable in the event that they are permanently separated, as the image of hazel and honeysuckle implies, it is also profoundly integrative of the beloved other.

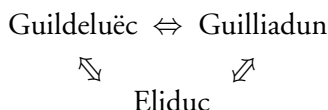
III. Toward a synthesis: In general, the *lais* representative of the Elegiac Plot emphasize exclusion or separation, while those representing the other two categories depict various kinds of positive bonds. Whether negative or positive, however, the ultimate relation of reciprocity finds expression in some type of memorable configuration that succinctly recalls the adventure of the featured couple. This would seem to further Marie's frequently expressed objective of creating written *remembrances* of these stories, to prevent them from falling into oblivion, *oubli*.¹²³ As the end of the collection approaches, *lais* ten, eleven, and twelve variously intensify this concern with establishing a memorable image of the *Lais*, their creator, and their significance. *Chaitivel* provides *en abyme* a miniaturized evocation of an authoress whose primary objective is to preserve her experience in memory – “Voil que mis doels seit remembrez” (202) [I wish that my grief be remembered] – by recording it in a *lai*. At the end of *Chievrefoil* we read that “Pur les paroles remembrer / Tristram, ki bien saveit harper, / En aveit fet un nuvel *lai*” (111–13) [So that the words might be remembered, Tristan, an accomplished harpist, had composed a new lay with them], and the epilogue of *Eliduc* asserts that the Bretons “Firent le lai pur remembrer, / Qu’hum nel deüst pas oblier” (1183–84) [composed the lay so as to remember it, in order that it not be forgotten]. Along with these tributes to the mnemonic narrative and melodic techniques of Marie's precursors, however, *Chievrefoil* and *Eliduc* are suggestive of a concern with rounding out the collection by means of a sublimely memorable synthesis, one that concerns precisely the question of reciprocity. Respectively the shortest and the longest works, *Chievrefoil* addresses it in extreme and sententious brevity, *Eliduc* by means of an exceptionally detailed

amplification that draws all three types of plot into a monumental closing equilibrium.

In *Chievrefoil* the specular encounter is confined to a single phrase of direct discourse, when Tristan says “Bele amie, si est de nus: / Ne vus sanz mei, ne jeo sanz vus” (77–78) [Fair beloved, thus are we: neither you without me, nor I without you]. This unadorned utterance is arguably the *umbilicus*, the key locus of the entire collection. For it is the point at which the principle of reciprocity is exquisitely distilled into the one quintessential proposition variously illustrated in each of the *lais*: here the narrative distance between the specular encounter and the closing configuration of reciprocity, a trajectory whose extension varies from one *lai* to another, is reduced to zero. The essence of reciprocity now comes into prominence as the lowest common denominator variously illustrated in all of the *lais*: “Ne vus sanz mei, ne jeo sanz vus.” The underlying logic of this proposition subtends all of the major instances of specular encounter and in each instance grounds the invention of a specific argument for the establishment of an ultimate and definitive reciprocal relation.¹²⁴ This would appear to be the master trope variously explored in the discursive circumstantiality of each *lai*; in the collection as a whole, it receives twelve different exploratory illustrations.

Brought into full prominence in the penultimate poem, the proposition is subjected to new and unprecedented development in *Eliduc*, whose hero is torn between love for his mistress and loyalty to his wife. Elsewhere in the collection, love triangles are resolved either by spousal vengeance, as in *Equitan* for example, or by the ultimately positive association of two subjects while a third is in some way permanently excluded. In contrast, we have seen how triadic succession in *Eliduc* culminates in the establishment of perdurable spiritual bonds between the two women as well as between each of them and Eliduc, such that the end of the story conveys an acute sense that the kinds of two-subject reciprocity that mark the end of previous texts is here transcended by a selflessly inclusive, triune spirituality. While a degree of trisubjective inclusiveness is at least anticipated by the queen at the end of *Chievrefoil*, when she foresees a potential healing of the breach between uncle and nephew – the queen “li mustra cumfaiement / Del rei avrat acordement, / E que mut li aveit pesé / De ceo qu’il l’ot si cungeé: / Par

encusement l'aveit fait" (97–101) [indicated how he might be reconciled with the king, who had been very distressed thus to have banished him; he had done it because of a denunciation] – the virtual erasure of triangular tensions occurs only at the end of *Eliduc*. This is the only *lai* in the collection, moreover, in which the story progresses through all three types of plot, beginning with the Courtly type adumbrated with the nascent love between Eliduc and Guilliadun, followed by the Elegiac type as the story changes course in the direction of a tale of lovers separated by death, but then culminating in a unique resolution that partakes of the Comic type yet also considerably broadens its significance by triangulating the relation:



The plane of mortal amatory relationships of whatever sort is ultimately supplanted by the implication that, on a higher level of spiritual insight, collective transcendence of such ties is possible, so as to achieve a vision of love as an inclusive sharing of charitable self-abnegation.

In effect, the *Lais* draw to a close in a kind of spiritual stasis reminiscent of the conventional “moniage” that sometimes rounds out Old French epic and romance cycles, in that Eliduc relinquishes the world of prowess and courtly pursuits and retreats into the contemplative life of the monastery or the hermitage. Yet unlike the “moniage,” this collection ends in a constellation of epiphanies, as each member of the triad achieves a sublime and ineffable relation of transcendence, suggestive of a mystic union. Critical opinion is divided on the issue of closure thus suggested. Bruckner, for example, struck by how “the final configuration” of three individuals “joined in their service to God” is “inclusive, rather than exclusive,” suggests that “God’s universal aspect, which reconciles unity *and* multiplicity,” provides Marie with a model to “close off” the narrative dynamic, with “no plot strings left hanging, so that after reading the final *lai* we “recognize the boundary it establishes for Marie’s *assemblage*.” Likewise, for McCash the final *lai* “emphasizes the inclusivity of love within a divine context,” providing “an immutable resolution that lies beyond any turn of Fortune’s wheel.”¹²⁵ For Alexandre Leupin, on the other hand, who explores the

artificiality and transgressiveness of “closures” in the *Lais*, Eliduc’s murder of the sailor, which certainly remains a “loose thread” in the plot, marks “the triumph of a human will in rebellion *against* its Creator” (239, his emphasis), while Guildeluëc’s personal abolition of her marriage sacrament runs counter to canon law, as does Eliduc’s remarriage “without the obligatory mediation of a priest” (238).¹²⁶ In his view, “the debate between theology and literature in the *Lais* cannot be closed either by the assumptions of the former or by the transgressions of the latter,” and Marie’s text retains “a reserve of meaning which is not exhausted by its Christian manifestation” (239; 241–42).

Can it be assumed, then, that the ensemble in the Harley manuscript we identify as “the *Lais* of Marie de France” discloses a topical organizing principle that is identified in the eleventh *lai* and adapted in the twelfth so as to provide the collection with closure? The capacity of the *Lais* – not just *Eliduc* but all of the poems in the collection – to awaken hesitation between the perception of a final equilibrium, stasis, or closure and on the other hand a sense of the indeterminacy of an elusive realm of meaning is already explicitly set forth in the poetic project detailed in the prologue to the *Lais*.¹²⁷ Marie evokes the authors of antiquity whose custom it was to write obscurely so that later readers might in turn provide their own gloss of a text – in her words, a “surplus” of meaning (*sen*):

Custume fu as anciens,
Ceo testimoine Preciens,
Es livres ke jadis feseient,
Assez obscurement diseient
Pur ceus ki a venir esteient
E ki aprendre les deveient,
K’i peüssent gloser la lettre
E de lur sen le surplus mettre.
(9–16)

[It was customary among the ancients, as Priscian attests, to write quite obscurely in the books they composed, so that those who would later study them might prepare a gloss of the text and supply their latent meaning.]

This principle of textual obscurity goes hand in hand with a notion of

the progressive refinement of the interpretive faculties required for engaging it effectively:

Li philosophe le saveient,
Par eus meïsmes entendeient,
Cum plus trespasereit li tens,
Plus serreient sutil de sens
E plus se savreient garder
De ceo k'i ert a trespasser.
(17–22)¹²⁸

[The wise men knew this – understood it among themselves – that with the passage of time their understanding would be keener and they would be more adept at keeping themselves from overlooking nuances.]

This view, which optimistically depicts reception as an effort to *construe* earlier texts – precisely what Marie herself does in addressing her own source material¹²⁹ – implies that she anticipates that future generations might also construe subtle nuances in her own writings.¹³⁰

Marie's treatment of the problematic of reciprocity seems designed to engender incisive construal on the part of the reader. The subtlety with which her closing reciprocities imply meaningful convergences nonetheless mitigates against the reader's perception of any facile, simplistic view of reciprocity that would allow our interpretive faculties to turn each of Marie's *lais* into a systematically closed, totalized entity. We have seen that the various material signifiers of reciprocity often seem detached from any explicit context of signification and thus all the more apt to lend an impression of inexhaustible signifying depth, while at the same time hinting at the existence of a powerful but indeterminable meaning. Hence the hermeneutically "open" quality of the *Lais*: though the achievement of reciprocity occasions a sense of fulfillment, it also inhibits the reader's full understanding of the significance behind it. Having reached at its symbolic terminus a point of equilibrium with regard to an objective correlative of its meaning, the text hints obscurely at, but never fully specifies, the existence of a much deeper significance – thus generating the reader's utopian desire to "solve the mystery."¹³¹ The perennial capacity of these poems to awaken readerly curiosity has for centuries ensured to them a rich tradition of interpretive glossing

born of a desire to close the chasm between primary signifiers and their apparent grounding in meanings whose fullness inevitably eludes us.

What, then, can be said of the essential nature of the reciprocity toward which the specular encounter inevitably serves as guide in the *Lais*? Never, not even in the final *lai*, is there any total congruence or merger of two beings. Instead, what we discover throughout is a kind of *quasi-reciprocity* that finds expression, usually by the narrator, in terms of a shared outlook, or a rapprochement of two wills, hearts, or minds in harmony by virtue of the affective ties, whether they be nefarious or beneficial, that draw them together. In such reciprocity, there is always an interpretive distance that either precedes it and makes it possible or signals its existence.¹³²

In this regard, *Chievrefoil* again offers a perspective that is to various degrees germane to the entire collection, for it plays upon the paradox between exaltation of reciprocal union as the ultimate and ideal end, and the impossibility of ever fully realizing such an elusive objective. The metaphor *in praesentia* equating the couple with the hazel and honeysuckle, while resonating transtextually as a figural prolepsis of the Tristan legend's tragic denouement, is also a powerful condensation of this paradox as it is variously illustrated in Marie's *Lais*. By virtue of this botanical figure, specular encounter is implicitly conceptualized naïvely as the unmediated presence of self and other. This sense is further generalized by the nebulous imprecision about the kind of medium that carried Tristan's message (Was it originally part of a written document? An inscription?), as well as by the melding of free indirect discourse with a direct citation of Tristan's own concluding words, all of which effectively blurs the distinction between the narrative voice and the originary instance of its inscription.¹³³ This indirect contextualization of his lyrical utterance has the effect of detaching it from its artificer, of cutting it adrift from its moorings in a specific situation of enunciation. While the passage as a whole retains vestiges of its identity as Tristan's message to the queen, by virtue of its mixed discursive markings, it also permeates textual boundaries and resonates profoundly, as a kind of free-floating signifier, within the larger signifying universe of the *Lais*.

Yet within that global dimension, it emphasizes the paradox the other *lais* variously illustrate by means of the specular encounter: while

intersubjective reciprocity is both the ultimate objective of the narrative's momentum and the desired end of human love, an unproblematically mutual, unmediated self-presence is unattainable. This becomes all the more apparent in the denouement of *Eliduc*, where the euphoria of a noumenal, spiritual transcendence, in which all distinctions among discrete selves are implicitly assimilated to a reality of a higher order, opens onto an infinity born of fiction but beyond its capacity for representation. Within the confines of the collection, before it finally directs us toward the horizon of that vanishing point, we find only a variety of intersubjective unions that cohere in various degrees of *mediated reciprocity*.¹³⁴ In the final equilibrium achieved in any given *lai*, what is actualized is not the kind of mutual self-presence naively idealized by Tristan, but rather mutual participation in an intermediate cognitive order, a *shared awareness* concerning a universe of values or beliefs held in common with regard to a particular set of circumstances. This cognitive alliance of two individuals who are, though only to a limited degree, shareholders of the sublime, to some extent overcomes a sense of the utter alterity of the desired other. Invariably, however, it also demonstrates the impossibility of ever completely neutralizing distinctions of self and other.¹³⁵ While thus respecting the insuperable differences among individuals, even those between two individuals related in some type of optimal proximity, the *Lais* consistently bring them, if only momentarily, into a relationship of participative communication.¹³⁶

As for our schema of specular encounter, finally, there is never any total congruence or adequation between the *encountering self* and the *reflexive self* encountered in the discourse of the other. The latter holds up for scrutiny only a virtual image of the self and is thus an image which is, at that moment, fundamentally "other," simultaneously partaking both of the self *hic et nunc* and of other virtual dimensions of selfhood that are typically temporal, spatial and cognitive. Thus, as a schema of virtualization, the specular encounter in the *Lais* offers no positive sanctions or commemoration of an intrinsic state of affairs within the recipient. Hence its capacity to engender new and compensatory narrative strategies; hence also, no doubt, its appeal as the centerpiece of the resolutely open poetics of Marie de France.

The specular encounter in Arthurian romance

The specular encounter occurs frequently in medieval Arthurian romance, in both verse and prose. It is well suited to these narratives that emphasize *the unknown*, in myriad guises. Often, the disclosures concern aspects of identity, or of the past or the future; they typically resolve some major enigma of selfhood, always with dramatic consequences. While human informants abound, we also find ethereal voices, documents, inscriptions, and iconic representations. Despite this variability of circumstances and contexts, however, the basic schema persists.

We shall begin with the five Arthurian romances of Chrétien de Troyes, each of which accords the specular encounter special prominence at one crucial juncture. Chrétien's consistent recourse to the schema has important implications for the significance of his *oeuvre* as a whole. His prominent use of the specular encounter exercised a seminal influence on his successors. Although we obviously cannot examine all of its occurrences in this vast body of literature, we shall examine in detail its fortunes in *Le Bel Inconnu* of Renaut de Beaujeu and the cyclical Prose *Lancelot*, with occasional reference to other representative works from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, a period that witnessed the vigorous development and maturation of the medieval French Arthurian tradition.

CHRETIEN DE TROYES: SPECULARITY AND CRISIS

In Chrétien's romances as in Marie's *Lais*, the specular encounter is consistently the centerpiece of each narrative. Unlike Marie, however, Chrétien consistently makes it the pivotal segment in a fiction of

individuation. Although in some works it appears more than once, it always achieves maximal prominence in the principal segment of *crisis*, wherein an unsettling revelation made to a major personage, usually the protagonist, ushers in a quantum change of orientation. Along with the principal specular encounter, the crisis also contains a major instance of the motif of awakening.¹ In each of Chrétien's romances specular encounter and awakening are crucial components in the mediation between a problematic development in the first part of the poem and its rectification in the second part.

The first part of *Erec et Enide* features a generally auspicious series of episodes: bridewinning, marriage, the couple's glorious arrival in the realm where Erec is destined to reign, at which point a decline sets in, when Erec forsakes chivalry for a life of amorous isolation with Enide. The crisis erupts when criticism of his behavior reaches Enide. One morning as she quietly laments their situation, Erec awakens to hear her murmur: "Amis, con mar fus!" (2503) [My love, how dreadful for you!]. Demanding an explanation of the meaning of her words, he listens to Enide's lengthy, candid evaluation of their situation: "Vostre pris est molt abessiez: / . . . Or vos an estuet consoil prandre, / que vos puissiez ce blasme estaindre / et vostre premier los ataindre, / car trop vos ai oï blasmer" (2544, 2562–65) [Your esteem has greatly declined . . . So you must consider how you might silence these accusations and attain your former glory, for I've heard you being exceedingly faulted].

We hear Enide's voice here for the first time, while Erec, heretofore reassuringly mirrored in her admiring eyes, now finds in her discourse a window on the public's disapproval of his conduct. In her view Erec, for his sake as well as for the sake of her reputation, must lay this criticism to rest by recapturing his lost knightly honor.² The negative self-image tendered by this specular encounter brings about his immediate decision to return to an active life of prowess, while ensuring the narrative a sequel of far greater consequence, ultimately earning the couple a symbolic sanction at the pinnacle of courtly society.

In *Cligés*, specular encounter occurs along with awakening after a delusive *songe*. The dreamer is Alis, the Byzantine Emperor; the dream's sponsor is his bride Fénice, beloved of his nephew Cligés, to whom Alis had originally promised a clear succession to the throne by not marrying and producing an heir. Alis's dream, induced by a potion

prepared by Fénice's servant, is the first in a series of deceptive stratagems; it ensures that this marriage remains unconsummated.

When compared with the analogous scene in *Erec et Enide*, the wedding night leading up to this dream is characteristic of the highly ironic way in which the crisis in *Cligés* unfolds.³ As in *Erec*, the scene shifts from the banquet hall to preparations in the bedchamber; in both there is the same concern with ceremony, including the blessing of the nuptial bed and evocation of the newlyweds' solitary bliss. But Enide's union is a happy one, whereas Fénice fears that Thessala's potion may not work its wonders, so as to eschew the scandalous example of Tristan and Iseut. Like King Mark's bride, she makes the hero's uncle believe that he is duly consummating his marriage; Thessala's potion is the functional analogue of Brangien's virginity. In fact Brangien is explicitly excluded from the wedding night of Erec and his bride: "A cele premiere asanblee, / la ne fu pas Enyde anblee, / ne Brangiens an leu de li mise" (2021–23)⁴ [In that first union, Brangien was not substituted for Enide]. King Mark's illusory wedding night is thus quietly evoked as an ironically subversive model in *Erec*, then reconfigured in *Cligés*, in the manifold nothingness of Alis's dream: "Tenir la cuide, n'an tient mie, / Mes de neant est a grant eise, / Car neant tient, et neant beise, / Neant tient, a neant parole, / Neant voit, et neant acole, / A neant tance, a neant luite. (3316–21)⁵ [He thinks he holds her, but he holds not a whit, but in nothing finds great comfort, for he cuddles nothing, and nothing kisses, nothing hugs, to nothing murmurs, nothing sees, and nothing embraces, with nothing strives, with nothing struggles]. The delusively specular dream of carnal love reciprocated convinces Alis that he has "taken the fortress" (3326–28). This colossal deception marks the exact midpoint, after which the second half of the poem exploits the narrative potential of this fraudulent fiction.⁶

Further deceit ensues: the false death and entombment of Fénice, the clandestine couple's long idyll in a marvelous, impenetrable tower and its adjacent orchard, where, finally, the sleeping pair are awakened by the lapsarian symbol of a falling pear and the untimely arrival of a hunter in pursuit of an errant bird, whereupon the extended crisis finally begins to unravel: Alis at last recognizes the ruses, yet the whole world now recognizes his wrongs. His death and the couple's coronation ensue in quick succession. By deferring the moment of recognition

from Alis's awakening at midpoint to the couple's awakening near the end of the poem, the story achieves an inverted symmetry, between the never-achieved reign of Cligés's parents, Alexander and Soredamor, and the belated reign of Cligés and Fénice. The second, successful approach to the Byzantine throne is achieved by suspending the climax through most of the second part of the poem. While deepening the ironies that run throughout the poem, the specular encounter and the motif of awakening create a bipartite symmetry that traces the pursuit of love and sovereignty contrastively through two generations.

In *Le Chevalier au lion* the specular encounter triggers Yvain's crisis, while he and Gauvain are celebrating a stellar year of tourneying.⁷ Just as Yvain remembers that he has failed to return to his wife within the promised year, the lady's messenger delivers her repudiation: "Yvain, n'a mes cure de toi / ma dame, ainz te mande par moi / que ja mes vers li ne reveignes / ne son anel plus ne reteignes" (2769–72)⁸ [Yvain, my lady no longer cares for you and orders you, through me, that you never return to her and no longer keep her ring].

While Enide's critique was private, Yvain must contend with public humiliation by proxy, and after this devastating specular encounter he takes refuge in the wilderness, where he regresses in distinct phases, from abjection and self-hatred to loss of memory and predatory subsistence on raw meat (2828). Then comes his slow ascent back toward mankind, as he exchanges game for a hermit's bread and venison (2831–83).⁹ Discovering him unconscious in the forest, a damsel revives him with an unguent (2884–3015). This magically induced awakening formally closes the crisis by enabling him to begin the long journey back to Laudine. Moreover, it achieves this by providing an element of negative specularity: "Mes nuz se voit com un yvoire; / s'a grant honte . . . et de sa char que il voit nue / est trespanseiz et esbaïz" (3016–17; 3024–25) [But he sees himself as naked as an ivory carving, and is ashamed . . . and is perplexed and bewildered by his bare flesh]. Overwhelming shame had sparked his crisis; now he begins his rehabilitative ascent with an acute sense of shame as a corporeal experience.¹⁰ Now perceiving himself as he fears others who once knew him will, as a being woefully lapsed from his former glory (3026–28), he dons the clothing left for him by the damsel and begins the long odyssey back to his lady's domain.¹¹ Framed by the specular encounter

and the awakening, this crisis is the fulcrum of the work as a whole, the second part of which tells how he atones for his failure, although not without repeatedly retracing the itinerary that had first led him to his initial encounter with Laudine.

In *Le Chevalier de la charrete*, the dramatic crisis featuring awakening and specular encounter reanimates the story at a point where its potential is virtually exhausted. At this intermediary juncture, Lancelot has apparently liberated the prisoners in Gorre and has savored a nocturnal tryst with the queen in her bedchamber. Their night of love marks the poem's bipartition and conditions the crisis that erupts the next morning.¹² Once again, it turns a private matter into a public scandal.¹³ In this instance, the awakening coincides with the onset of crisis. Awakening back in his quarters, Lancelot assumes that the cuts on his fingers resulted from his efforts to force apart the bars on the window of Guenevere's chamber (4722–36).¹⁴ The queen, meanwhile, awakens to find blood stains on her sheets, and assumes they are due to a nocturnal nosebleed, whereupon Meleagant, her captor and Lancelot's adversary, arrives and erroneously surmises that the stains were left by the wounded Kay, who had been sleeping nearby. As Meleagant reconstructs the events of the preceding night according to his own tortured logic, the queen and Kay are soon joined by King Bademagu, Meleagant's father, and Lancelot.¹⁵ While at this point only God, Lancelot, and the reader know the truth behind the evidence that comes to light in this awakening scene, the specular encounter reopens the intrigue by provoking the crisis. It also introduces a curiously ironic perspective. The queen herself is unaware that the blood stains are Lancelot's, and even though Meleagant has publicly deplored her adultery, the couple's secret remains intact throughout.¹⁶

In the unfinished *Conte du graal*, the specular encounter occurs frequently in the adventures of both Perceval and Gauvain. Through a series of such encounters, Perceval gradually learns that the true object of his quest is self-knowledge.¹⁷ His mother had raised him in ignorance both of his father and brothers and of the chivalric existence that had claimed them. After passing knights elicit his determination to emulate them, however, she finally relinquishes the tragic secret of how the battle-maimed father had died of grief after his sons were killed in combat.¹⁸ This specular story relocates Perceval within the constella-

tion of his family and bilineally prestigious nobility. Yet her warning against chivalry falls on deaf ears; discovery of the chivalrous paternal image serves only to hasten his departure for the renowned Arthurian court.

Although Perceval's subsequent itinerary does lead to conferral of knighthood by a venerable mentor, it also brings Perceval into contact with a profoundly destabilized feudal world, whether at Arthur's court, the noble domain of Blanchefleur, or the disrupted realm of his own unrecognized kinsman, the wounded Fisher King. These venues all bear the scars of some obscure catastrophe that marked the end of the reign of King Uther, Arthur's father.¹⁹ Yet what befalls Perceval at these troubled junctures is ultimately less consequential than is his growth in understanding, highlighted by specular encounters and awakenings.²⁰

At the Fisher King's Castle he had witnessed the enigmatic procession, but had failed to ask the requisite questions concerning lance and grail. The next morning he awakens to an apparently deserted castle, and then, in the first of two pre-crisis specular encounters, learns from a damsel – his own cousin, as it turns out – that his failure to ask about the procession was linked with his having abandoned his grief-stricken mother, and that his asking the questions would have healed the monarch and brought untold benefits (3422–690).

By the following morning, however, he has obviously forgotten this encounter as, after awakening to find a wintry landscape, the drops of blood on the snow left by a wounded snow-goose remind him only of the rosy blush on his lady Blanchefleur's face.²¹ By now clearly evanescent, his memory of the grail and lance at the Grail Castle is soon revived by a second, far more dramatic specular encounter, one that finally initiates the crisis. In a passage reminiscent of Yvain's encounter with Laudine's messenger, a loathly damsel arrives at Arthur's court and publicly excoriates Perceval for the opportunity he missed (4646–83). The consequences of not having asked about the objects in the procession are catastrophic. Unhealed, the Fisher King cannot govern his realm. "Dames en perdront lor maris, / Terres en seront escillies, / Et puceles desconseillies, / Qui orfenines remandront, / Et maint chevalier en morront, / Tot cist mal esteront par toi" (4678–83) [Wives will lose their husbands, lands be laid waste, maidens bereft and orphaned, and many a knight will die: all of this evil will be on your account]. As in

Yvain's confrontation by Laudine's messenger, shame follows on the heels of glory. The crisis introduces a new conflict just as earlier narrative potential has been exhausted. When it erupts, Perceval has defeated Orgueilleus de la Lande and avenged the latter's abused damsel, and restored order to Blanchefleur's lands as promised, while a prophecy concerning his achievement of chivalric renown, made during his first visit to Arthur's court, has now been fulfilled. Paradoxically, this worldly recognition coincides with the crone's deploration of a golden opportunity tragically lost, thus opening the narrative onto new perspectives. Although the romance breaks off before Perceval finds his way back to the Grail Castle, a further instance of the specular schema completes his initiation, when a saintly hermit, his maternal uncle, reveals that the Fisher King is Perceval's maternal uncle, son of the Grail King whose sole sustenance for twelve years has been the consecrated host in the vessel (6392–433).²²

Perceval's successive specular encounters solve the enigma of his origins while also recalling, in a largely negative light, salient aspects of his own earlier exploits. Together, they inscribe his image and destiny into a harmonious background of distinguished matri- and patrilineal genealogies, counterpoising the chivalrous image of the absent father with the spiritualized figures of the maternal uncle in the grail family.²³ This lineal mediation of chivalry and spirituality emanating from Perceval's encounters with informants finds an echo in the symbolism of grail and lance, which associate the temporal with the transcendental and paternal prowess with maternal nurturance. The realm of the grail that Perceval so ardently strives to rediscover is perhaps only temporarily lost in the alterity of time and space. For the narratee of the specular stories that limn his itinerary, it is a matter of making his way back into a misplaced text, of turning the adventure of the Grail Castle into a mirror of itself.

Perceval's crisis coincides with the beginning of Gauvain's quest to clear himself of charges of treason. He eventually arrives at an enchanted castle whose occupants – an aged queen, her elderly daughter and young granddaughter, plus a large contingent of youths and elders eager to be knighted – all await the arrival of the knight who will put an end to the land's enchantment and govern it productively. Having succeeded in the qualifying ordeal of the Bed of Marvels, Gauvain

becomes the castle's long-awaited lord and master (7924). This episode is the analogue of Perceval's initial visit to the Grail Castle, and both culminate in a kind of failure.²⁴ In each case, a castle remote in time and space awaits a lord who will restore order, vitality, and prosperity. Whereas Perceval had failed to raise the appropriate questions, now Gauvain is reluctant to assume his duties, for such lordship has its price: significant restriction of his freedom of movement.

Gauvain's pre-crisis awakening occurs in the very bed whose marvels he had conquered the previous day, but, like Perceval, he leaves the castle without discovering its profound significance to himself. Yet again like Perceval, his first adventure after his departure leads him to a moment of specular enlightenment. After crossing a perilous ford, Gauvain discovers from a knight who knows about him precisely that of which he has heretofore remained ignorant. As with Perceval, however, worldly honor coincides with the disclosure of his failure at the castle to ask the crucial question that would have revealed his kinship with its occupants. Guiromelant, Gauvain's informant, tells him that the elder queen is Ygerne, Uterpandragon's widow, who had come to this land after he died; she brought her daughter, Lot's wife and mother of Gauvain, who then gave birth to Gauvain's sister. Hence, once again, a dramatic revelation concerning genealogy. Moreover, like the Grail Castle, the Castle of Roche de Canguin is the residence of the hero's matrilineal family, living in remote isolation, almost as if successive generations had been suspended in time following an upheaval occasioned by the death or injury of the reigning patriarch.

Because the romance breaks off shortly thereafter, this final crisis will forever await a full resolution, though there is some evidence that it has already begun to resolve: when he returns to the family castle, he fulfills the functions of a suzerain, dubbing five hundred knights in a rewriting of the climactic moments of the "Joie de la Cort" episode in *Erec et Enide*.²⁵ From the way in which awakening and the specular encounter once again serve so prominently, we see that Gauvain's adventures were organized along lines similar to those of Chrétien's other heroes.

All of Chrétien's romances thus feature a bipartite plot organized around a transitional crisis.²⁶ We have seen that though the crisis may vary in length, it is consistently marked by instances of specular encounter and awakening. Their relative positions within the segment

of crisis may also vary. In *Erec et Enide*, awakening initiates the crisis and immediately precedes Erec's specular encounter. In *Cligés*, the delusive oneiric encounter defers the culmination of the crisis until after the couple's awakening in the orchard. The crisis in *Le Chevalier au lion* is activated by Laudine's messenger and ends with Yvain's awakening. In the *Charrete*, the spatially disjunct awakenings of Lancelot and the queen precede the distorted specular analysis that sparks their crisis. Perceval's serene awakening to an amatory reverie prefaces his shattering encounter with the hideous crone. Gauvain awakens in crisis, ambivalent about assuming lordship of the castle he has conquered; then comes his troubling encounter with Guiromelant, concerning his alleged crimes. In sum, specular encounter and awakening as they are variously developed may serve to provoke the crisis, mark its boundaries, or initiate the process of its resolution.

What are the implications of these significant associations of crisis with awakening and specular encounter in Chrétien's *œuvre*? In general, the crisis involves discovery of new objectives to compensate for inadequacies in the pre-crisis phase. Awakening typically connotes the protagonist's awakening receptivity to new knowledge or understanding.²⁷ Meanwhile, the specular encounter provides a rationale to justify or compel such change. Together, the two components animate the primary subjective transition fundamental to the crisis.

Specular encounter and awakening are thus instrumental in modifying the protagonist's self-perception with respect to circumstances and events. They are not consistently in service to the same type of intrigue, however, for Chrétien's plots fall into two distinct subtypes. In one type, exemplified by *Erec et Enide*, *Le Chevalier au lion*, and *Le Conte du graal*, the crisis discloses as *insufficiency within the protagonist*, and awakening and specular encounter are directly accessory to this end. In the other, represented by *Cligés* and *Le Chevalier de la charrete*, the crisis makes specular encounter and awakening tributary to the *concealment of an adulterous liaison*. In the former type, the crisis features a critical or vituperative female informant – Enide, Laudine's messenger, or the loathly damsel. In the plot of concealed adultery, the focus is on the hero's deluded rival, Alis or Meleagant. Both types nonetheless disclose a lack within the hero and the consequent inadequacy of his situation, and this is best described as *a lack of mastery of the*

realm. Erec shirks his responsibilities as heir apparent; Cligés avoids a legitimate confrontation with Alis and instead disappears with Fénice; Yvain forsakes his duty as guardian of the fountain; Lancelot's secret passion outweighs his mission as liberator; Perceval's selfish preoccupations prevent his restoration of the Fisher King's realm; Gauvain prefers adventures to the onus of lordship.

In both types of intrigue, the crisis grows from the pursuit of private – often erotic – satisfactions. An aura of sexual satiety precedes the crises of Erec and of Lancelot and the queen. Delusive persuasion of Alis facilitates the idyllic seclusion of Cligés and Fénice. Consummation of the marriage so ardently desired disposes Yvain to absent himself from Laudine's domain. Before Perceval's shattering encounter with the hideous damsel, blood drops on the snow remind him of love, not of the crimson lance. And Gauvain's crisis follows upon amorously playful distractions at Tintagel and Escavalon. Before the crisis, private interests paramount in the first part of the work have to a considerable extent been fulfilled. Following the crisis, the pursuit of personal satisfactions yields to matters familial, social, or spiritual.

We see, then, that the crisis mediates two orders of desire and two frequently opposed modes of human initiative. Whereas in the pre-crisis subplots, the objects of desire tend to involve the pleasurable pursuits of private life, the crisis redirects desire toward a larger realm of public responsibility.²⁸ Hence a basic transition from instinctual satisfactions to those that pertain to authority and the social hierarchy. Consider *Erec et Enide*: Erec sets aside chivalric duties in favor of amorous seclusion. When he first encountered Enide, she had been the object of her father's pleasure: "Quant ge ai delez moi ma fille, / tot le mont ne pris une bille; / c'est mes deduiz, c'est mes deporz, / c'est mes solaz et mes conforz, / c'est mes avoires et mes tresors, / je n'ain tant rien come son cors" (541–46) [When I have my daughter beside me, I care not a whit for the world. She's my pleasure, she's my delight, she's my joy and my comfort, she's my possession and my treasure, I love nothing as much as her person]. Not without incestuous undertones, this lyrical effusion emphasizes pleasure over cares of "the world." In combat, Erec wins this object of paternal delight, then insists that she be attired only by Arthur's queen (1349). Thus regally adorned, Enide inspires Arthur's courtly declaration: "Puis dist as chevaliers: 'Seignor, / que dites vos?

Que vos an sanble? / Ceste est de cors, de vis ansanble, / et de quanqu'estuet a pucele, / et la plus gente? et la plus bele?' / . . . / et si li dist: 'Ma dolce amie, / m'amor vos doing sans vilenie; / sanz malvestié et sanz folage, / vos amerai de boen corage'" (1736–40; 1789–92) [Then he said to the knights: Lords, what say you? What do you think? Both in body and countenance, and in all that beseems a maiden, is not she the most noble; the most beautiful? . . . and he said to her: My sweet beloved, I give you my love without baseness, malice or inconstancy, and will love you sincerely]. In sum, the hero wrests away the father's cherished maiden and has her attired as the sovereign's queen. After Arthur's courtly declaration of love, he marries her and takes her into his own father's realm – the needs of which he subsequently neglects.

The other romances disclose similar preoccupations. Cligés, his patrimony preempted by his paternal uncle, flees with the latter's bride after passive acquiescence to her scheming; the scandal eventually precipitates his uncle's convenient demise (6604). Having killed the patriarch of the fountain's realm, Yvain ardently desires and hastily weds his widow and assumes his role, then abandons it for a year of tourneying. In the *Charrete*, while Lancelot supplants Arthur as the queen's mate, intense peer rivalry is suggested by Meleagant's jealousy of Lancelot and his suspicion of Kay's liaison with the queen. She rewards the devotion of Lancelot – the "favorite son" of Logres – and concurs with King Bademagu's restrictive decisions concerning his rebellious son, Lancelot's rival. Although Meleagant succeeds, initially, by stealing Arthur's queen, Lancelot will eventually deceive, defeat, even destroy him and take his prize, and all guilt for his malfesance with his suzerain's wife will ultimately be absorbed by this overbearing rival. In youthful exuberance, Perceval turns away from the faltering and moribund image of the mother only to reinvest his desire, initially, in the objects he erroneously believes she desired for him. Later on, his affair with the *châtelaine* Blanchefleur mingles her gentle nurturance with his nascent erotic interest and ultimately propels him to victory over his hostile rival, Clamadeu. Finally, in the course of Gauvain's eroticized adventures, his alleged murder of the old king of Escavalon in no way impedes his temporary enjoyment of a flirtatious interlude with the king's daughter.

Chrétien's pre-crisis intrigues are thus driven by pleasurable

initiatives, often at the expense of social responsibility. An underlying Oedipal fantasy defies representatives of the paternal sphere while exalting figures evocative of maternal qualities. Efforts to displace, defy, or defeat paternal figures may be relatively subtle and disguised by noble attitudes and behavior, or they may be manipulative (*Cligés*), even openly violent (*Yvain*). In this pre-crisis phase, figures of authority, Arthur as well as other monarchs and nobles, are characteristically either overbearing rivals or ineffectual, vulnerable weaklings. If named, the hero's father is usually absent and exercises little or no influence on his son. The hero is propelled by desire for an idealized woman, whose charms may be interiorized, or introjected, by the hero. For example, Alexander's long excursus on optics (*Cligés*, 618) depicts nascent love as the result of an ocular trauma. This tendency to introject the love relationship is redolent of narcissism, as is portraiture of the love-object as a positive reflector of the hero's self-image (*Erec*, 1466; 2037). Meanwhile, the idealized woman is normally the object of another male's concupiscent gaze or ardent desire. Enide attired by – and as a replica of – the queen, and haloed in the collective gaze of king and vassals; Fénice, betrothed to the paternal uncle and emperor; Laudine, widow of the fountain's defender; Blanchefleur, whose domain Clamadeu seeks to appropriate; in *Gorre*, even the queen herself, Arthur's abducted wife – all are, from the hero's perspective, beings desired by figures of authority.²⁹ Establishment of amatory reciprocity with such a doubly desired being is suggestive of an Oedipal triumph over a representative of the paternal sphere, the more so in that these idealized females are variously evocative of the maternal sphere. Often their spousal roles – queen, empress, *châtelaine* – place them, as veiled mother-surrogates, under sexual prohibition.

After this intensely subjective enterprise has been waylaid by the crisis, the sequel depicts engagements with social problems and transcendence of narcissistic or erotic concerns. Significantly, *Erec's* first effort to resolve the crisis is to order Enide to don her finest attire – “vostre robe la plus bele” (2577) – in reminiscence of her former queenly allure, and then to oblige her to ride into the wilderness ahead of him, where she serves as an enticement, to awaken the lust of a formidable series of aggressors, some of whose interest in her is flagrantly erotic (3308; 4655).³⁰ Libidinal energy is here externalized,

projected into hostile, nightmarish challenges to be surmounted by the hero. Finally, in the climactic “Joie de la Cort” episode, Erec and Enide meet – and are to a certain extent specularized by – a couple bound by a lethal ritual of prowess that sustains their eroticized isolation from society. After neutralizing this narcissistic symbiosis of love and prowess and reintegrating the couple into courtly society, Erec and Enide achieve the pinnacle of social promotion in the closing coronation scene.

Although in his subsequent works Chrétien eschews such totalizing syntheses, an ultimate emphasis on the social horizon remains in evidence. The accession of Cligés and Fénice is consequent upon defeat of an illegitimate avuncular authority and restoration of the biological father’s legacy to its rightful heir. In *Le Chevalier au lion*, Yvain, acting on behalf of parties in need of defenders, requalifies himself to uphold the custom of the fountain whose patriarch he had displaced. In Lancelot’s ultimate adventure, he eliminates the primary threat to Arthur’s realm, but not before submitting absolutely to the edicts of the queen as she affects a regal severity at the Tournament of Noauz; although never wholly neutralized, the erotic momentum of the *Charrete* is eventually superseded by Lancelot’s defensive agency on behalf of the Arthurian realm. In the *Conte du graal*, finally, we see a shift from pleasurable pursuits to an ethic of social responsibility in both parts of the poem, as Perceval and Gauvain are reoriented toward the seignorial functions that have long awaited them.

Thus movement toward “mastery of the realm” in the post-crisis segment often involves symbolically significant temporal adjustments. In the “Joie de la Cort,” Erec and Enide abolish a nefarious suspension of time. To expiate his transgression of the temporal constraints set by Laudine, Yvain must always be on time to avert disaster.³¹ Lancelot, and also Gauvain in *Le Conte du graal*, are compelled to meet specific deadlines; Perceval and Gauvain are led to realms where time has long been suspended in anticipation of their arrival to renew it. The crisis may also define an itinerary to be retraced, to achieve a literal or symbolic transcendence of a simulacrum of the past. A temporality suggestive of the “future anterior” often predominates, as the future of the narrative becomes overdetermined by its past. Enide admonishes Erec to recover his former glory; Cligés honors his dying father’s

admonition to retrace the paternal itinerary back to the Arthurian world of his maternal kin; Yvain's tortuous trek back to the perilous fountain eventually leads him home; Lancelot's second, decisive struggle against Meleagant occurs after he has retraced in reverse order the journey that took him from Logres to Gorre; like that of Cligés, the futures of Perceval and Gauvain involve movement toward maternal kin, though in both cases their destination bears the earmarks of a long-suspended anterior order.

Two successive psychic stratagems are thus dramatized in each of these works. The first is dominated by fantasy and an intense affective interest suggestive of an underlying concern with recovery of some reconfigured form of the lost maternal object, combined with defeat of the representatives of paternal prohibition encountered in such a move. Following the crisis occasioned by this very enterprise, the second, compensatory stratagem replays essentially the same narrative dynamic, for the hero's assumption of institutional responsibilities is accomplished precisely by *repetition* of the initial process that had led to an unsatisfactory stasis and the critical trauma. Erec had taken Enide to Carnant, but only for a life of *recréantise*; after a new series of qualifying adventures, he returns as its sovereign. Yvain returns to defend the domain he had once neglected, but only after defending the domains of others. Lancelot had undertaken his initial, unresolved judicial combat with Meleagant in order to conceal the scandal of his affair with the queen; he will serve the needs of Arthur's realm only through a second arduous approach that finally leads him to a decisive judicial duel with Meleagant. In Constantinople, Cligés initially claimed Fénice by ruse and seclusion; only the second approach, endorsed by Arthur, brings him to the throne of Constantinople. In the *Conte du graal*, the Grail Castle and the Roche de Canguin are initially the loci of failure for Perceval and Gauvain, respectively; in each case, because selfish concerns outweighed the unacknowledged imperatives of lineage, the itinerary leading to the ancestral castle must be repeated.³²

In addition, the feminine object of desire is integrated into the realm of the hero's social responsibility, so that erotic interest is harmonized with the interests of the realm; this is marked by a corresponding shift in the hero's attitudes, from self-concern and narcissism to a more altruistic spirit, and from perception of the woman as merely the

flattering mirror of his erotic desire to a sense of her role in the concerns of the realm. This change of attitude may also accompany a change of social status, from knight to king, emperor, or patriarch. Implicit in this move is an endorsement of the feudal symbolic order, not in abject submission to its constraints, but in active assumption of its functions. No longer at odds, the symbolization of the two parental spheres ultimately undergoes positive revaluations as avatars of their roles are assumed by the protagonists, particularly in *Le Conte du graal*, where both the Grail Castle and the Roche de Canguin assimilate the parental dichotomy to an idealized image of lineage in which matrilineal and patriarchal imagoes are fused.³³

To the extent that the “working through” provided by this twofold dynamic is concerned with heroic individuation, it is a specifically chivalric, later feudal variety of individuation, one evocative of what Georges Duby identified as the experience of the *juventus*, or “jeune”.³⁴ These younger siblings of noble families where primogeniture obtained made their way into the feudal hierarchy through chivalric pursuits, including itinerance, tourneying, and warfare, so as to stake a claim within the feudal establishment, often through marriage to a wealthy heiress. Here the primary preoccupation was not with flight into a fanciful lineage, but rather with integration into an economic and political reality.³⁵ Chrétien’s fictions too are suggestive of a dynamic process of integration, captivating the youthful exuberance of chivalric ambition in its earlier phases, and *harnessing* youthful energy so as to bind it more firmly within the symbolic hierarchy of the feudal order and its institutions. This, as we have seen, is a process accomplished in *two* phases, by a negatively marked series of developments and its corrective repetition, so that in Chrétien’s works the diptych of crisis textuality also serves as a format for the elaboration of various narrative processes of social apprenticeship. In these feudal fictions of individuation, the objective is, if not to close – as in the idealized resolution of *Erec et Enide* – then at least to narrow – as in the later romances – the gulf between the private, personal sphere of chivalric self-affirmation and the politico-ecclesiological framework whose stability requires the unwavering support of chivalry.³⁶

As vehicles of exemplary ethical development, these narratives exploit instructive contrasts between a problematic “before” and a

corrective “after,” articulated by an intermediary segment of crisis featuring a monumental change of axiology. However, unlike many hagiographic and epic texts whose rhetoric envisages the modification or the reaffirmation of values on a collective scale, Chrétien’s textualities of crisis locate the process of revalorization *within* a single exemplar rather than within the chivalric class as a whole, hence the prominence assumed within the crisis by specular encounter and awakening, both of which are highly indicative that the dynamic aspect of the crisis involves a profound modification of consciousness. While – as in the type of saint’s biography illustrated by Eustace – there is a valorization of “revealed” knowledge imparted by an informant, the latter in Chrétien’s romances is *not* a supernatural being but an emissary from some more familiar sphere – a spouse or other relative, a member of the household, or a representative of some beleaguered individual or community – and the message is an implicit or explicit injunction – a solicitation of the initiatives of selfhood on behalf of a familiar “other,” be it a relative, a lineage, or a community.

Ultimately, however, like the *Lais* of Marie de France, these romances involve much more than exemplary processes of heroic individuation. For the images of the various parties that solicit the hero’s support never recede from the immediate background, and as we read through the five works the reproachful entreaties of the informants assume increasingly disturbing guises, while the potential for social disruption seems always more imminent, the consequences more ominous. In the *Conte du graal*, finally, the solicitations from the Grail Castle and the Roche de Canguin convey an unprecedented sense of desperation, as if the specular encounter were meant to capture and compel the hero’s lineally mandated services. The message too acquires a new connotation of venerable origins when the last of Perceval’s guides, the hermit uncle, comes close to replicating the supernaturally informed informant of the hagiographical specular encounter.

This ultimate intensification of the specular solicitation occurs precisely as the progressive decline depicted on an intertextual scale seems to reach its nadir. For within the larger dimension of the *oeuvre* as a whole, the Arthurian symbolic order is gradually rendered obsolete and ultimately stagnates; it sinks into chaos under a feeble monarch surrounded by a chivalric contingent grown indifferent to the

Arthurian ideal.³⁷ In this more comprehensive *intertextuality of crisis*, the ideal of exemplary heroic service suggested in Chrétien's individual works contrasts markedly with the widening ideological rift between the sovereign and his court, including the heroes.³⁸ In his final, unfinished romance, images of widespread social decadence are contrasted negatively with the idealized image purveyed by Perceval's ultimate specular encounter, an image of chivalric individuation in harmony with an order in which paternal and maternal spheres are superimposed within a larger context of spirituality. This move late in the *oeuvre* away from the conventions of a more militant and aggressive chivalry suggests that we should not read the earlier works merely as the glorious fictions of chivalric individuation that they are sometimes perceived as being.³⁹ For in Chrétien's transtextual critique of the Arthurian world, he ultimately takes us beyond these heroic biographies and toward a "reality" of a higher, spiritual order, while suggesting in the end that some enterprises in the feudal world that had mobilized the highest exploits of his earlier heroes were merely further manifestations of the pleasure principle that had been carefully disguised in a suit of armor.

SPECULAR ENCOUNTERS IN *LE BEL INCONNU*

By making the specular encounter a vehicle for the revelation of lineage and identity in his last romance, Chrétien anticipated, and perhaps originated, a significant trend, for Perceval's successive encounters follow a pattern of initiation by an informant that recurs prominently in many later Arthurian romances. One of Chrétien's earliest successors, Renaut de Beaujeu,⁴⁰ whose romance *Le Bel Inconnu* in general shows considerable indebtedness to the works of Chrétien,⁴¹ in fact makes this type of specular encounter the centerpiece of his own fiction. Like Chrétien's narratives, the comprehensive structure of *Le Bel Inconnu* adheres to the maximal dimensions of a textuality of crisis, and the bipartition divides the narrative, with remarkable symmetry, into two segments of approximately equal length.⁴² Even more striking is the fact that the two panels of the diptych are conjoined by a central crisis featuring a significant instance of the motif of awakening and multiple occurrences of specular encounter.

The first half of *Le Bel Inconnu* unfolds in a manner characteristic of Chrétien's romances: the opening scene at Arthur's court prefaces an initial series of extraordinary heroic exploits. When the young hero – let us call him “the Unknown” – arrives at court unaware of his own name, Arthur unceremoniously dubs him “Li Biaus Descouneüs” and then grants him, though reluctantly in view of the youth's undemonstrated prowess, a “rash boon,” honoring his eagerness to seek the *fier baiser* in order to free a princess and her realm from an evil enchantment. Developed through the first half of the romance, his quest is marked by many illustrious deeds and at the numerical midpoint culminates in the supreme ordeal: his reception of the requisite “kiss” from a redoubtable serpent, the *wivre* or *guivre*, whereupon the enchantment is broken.⁴³

As in Chrétien's romances, however, the hero's achievements are, at midcourse, abruptly contrasted with troubling disclosures that eventually provoke a crisis with extensive ramifications. Immediately following the ordeal, the prayerful Unknown regrets that he had allowed the devil to impose the *fier baiser*, as he assumes, and becomes despondent (3205–11), whereupon he is sharply contradicted by the piercing cries of an ethereal voice that reveals “Dont il estoit et de quel gent” (3214) [whence he came and from what folk]. Addressing him as “Li fuis a mon signor Gavain” (3216) [the son of my lord Gauvain], the voice proclaims that only he or his father Gauvain could have endured the perilous adventure of the kiss, and that by withstanding it he has rescued a noble lady. Arthur named him poorly by calling him “Bel Descouneü” (3232): “Guinglains as non en batestire” (3234) [your baptismal name is Guinglain]; fathered by Gauvain, his mother is Blancemal, a fairy, and it was she who armed him and sent him to Arthur.⁴⁴ After declaring his unqualified victory – “Bien as conquise ta querele” (3242) [You've won your case handily] – the voice lapses into silence, and Guinglain, though overjoyed to have learned the identity of his father, is exhausted from the ordeal and falls asleep.

This initial specular encounter is rich in disclosures pertaining to identity. Along with his own name, he learns those of his father and his mother, and this speculum places him at the confluence of a magnificently bifurcated genealogy, Arthurian on the agnatic side and matrilineally supernatural. Guinglain now finds himself at the crossroads of concerns that are both feudal and otherworldly. Yet this stunning

moment of self-discovery is curiously paradoxical, in that it signals both a plenitude and a dearth of knowledge. Although this is potentially the ideal informant – “Tote ta vie te sai dire” (3234) [I can tell you your entire life] – it is a disembodied discourse, and for Guinglain the implications of its revelations remain an impenetrable mystery.

Hence the potential for further specular encounters, which the author loses no time in exploiting. Guinglain’s awakening, which recalls Chrétien’s uses of the motif to suggest the advent of a higher awareness, coincides with a second encounter, one that sends his social status even higher. The earlier one had unveiled the chivalric patrimony; now his own accession to monarchy appears imminent. Before him stands a beautiful, magnificently attired woman: “ge sui cele / Por cui ala la damoisele / Au roi Artu le secors querre; / Por moi estes en cete terre.” (3311–14) [It was I for whom the damsel went to King Arthur for help; you are in this land on account of me]. This, he learns, is in fact their second meeting since his arrival – the mystery of the *guivre* is now dissipated: “Li guivre qui vos vint baissier, / Qui si vos savoit losengier, / Ce fui je, sire, sans mentir. / Ne pooie autrement garir / Que tot adés guivre ne fuisse / De si que baissié vos eüsse” (3375–80)⁴⁵ [The serpent that came to kiss you and so deftly beguiled you was I, sir, in truth. I couldn’t escape being a serpent forever except by kissing you]. By receiving her salutary kiss, Guinglain has earned her hand and her late father’s realm, the kingdom of Wales: “vostre sui; / Vostre doi estre par raison . . . De mon regne serrés vos sire” (3304–05; 3384) [I am yours; yours I must rightly be . . . You shall be the lord of my realm]. Unbeknownst to the Unknown, his adventures had marked the phases of a bridewinning quest.⁴⁶

Here Renaut endows the specular encounter with a degree of flexibility unprecedented in Chrétien, for in addition to informing the hero, it serves as the vehicle of an etiologial account of this realm’s misfortunes following the death of the damsel’s father, thus enriching the main story line with a protodiegetic analepsis, a flashback that could cohere independently as a tale of malefic enchantment and coercion. As narratee, Guinglain listens to the woman’s account of how two malicious enchanter had reduced Senaudon, her city, to a heap of rubble – a Gaste Cité – and with the touch of a book had transformed her into a *wivre* (3342).⁴⁷ The elder of the two, Mabon, would

periodically lift the spell in order to entreat her to love and marry him; else she was to remain a serpent.

This autobiographical lament of a besieged heiress recalls the Blanche fleur episode in the *Conte du graal*. It quickly returns to the business immediately at hand, however, which is to provide specular clarification of Guinglain's peculiar status, by broaching the heroic qualifications necessary to end the siege: "Et riens ne me porroit garir, / Fors que li miudres chevaliers, / Li plus vaillans et li plus fiers, / De la manie Artu le roi; / Nesun millor n'i sai de toi, / Fors que tes pere, dans Gavains, / Qui est de totes bontés plains" (3356–62) [And nothing could save me, except the greatest knight, the most valorous and noble, from King Arthur's household; I know of no one there better than you, except your father Gauvain, who abounds in goodness]. These words, which confirm that the process of heroic qualification, extending from the Unknown's arrival at Arthur's court to his triumph in the *fier baiser*, is now complete, also anticipate the *Roman de Perlesvaus* and the Prose *Lancelot*, whose stellar heroes are also "li miudres chevaliers." Yet this evocation of Gauvain is the first hint of an ambiguity that subsequently intensifies.

Here as elsewhere in *Le Bel Inconnu* Guinglain is compared with his father, whose prowess is evoked as prototypical. Gauvain in fact appears often in manuscript Chantilly 472, which contains the only extant version of *Le Bel Inconnu* and eight other Arthurian romances.⁴⁸ Although it has recently been suggested that the compiler of Chantilly 472 sought to create a "cycle" of romances with multiple branches centered on the figure of Gauvain,⁴⁹ the latter is significantly decentered by his own son in *Le Bel Inconnu*. Among other major father/son pairs in Arthurian romance, one might at first liken this contrast to the "pure" Galaad's eventual displacement of the more "worldly" Lancelot as "le meilleur chevalier du monde" in the cyclical Prose *Lancelot*.⁵⁰ Yet the comparison is hardly apt. For in *Le Bel Inconnu*, the work that lies at the center of the Chantilly manuscript, Renaut provides Gauvain with an offspring doubly worthy of his own renown, for deeds of prowess, certainly, but also for a characteristic fickleness in love and the duties of lordship, as opposed to the *deduits* of hunting and tournaments. Indeed, in Guinglain's specular encounters we glimpse Gauvain's episodic affair with a fairy before returning to the Arthurian world, a

pattern very similar to the one Guinglain himself will soon follow. In the middle of Chantilly 472, then, lies a romance whose midpoint exalts a son who will equal his father in terms of heroic luster, yet who will also, like the traditional Gauvain, remain caught between devoted women to whom he has made conflicting commitments. Thus, though the center of the narrative “tympanum” formed by the manuscripts in Chantilly 472 appears to specularize this redeemer of heiresses and their realms – this son of Gauvain – as it were “in majesty,” it subtly anticipates the irony that gradually emerges in the rest of the romance.

Prior to exploring these tensions, Renaut prolongs the afterglow of Guinglain’s successful quest, which creates the effect of a “crescendo” leading up to the climactic initial specular encounter that opens the middle section. This is apparent from the artful disposition of customs and heraldic devices among the qualifying adventures leading to the *fier baiser*. Each one recalls issues pertaining to *coutumes* and *usages* in Chrétien’s romances, as the Unknown progressively demonstrates his competence in conflicts governed by the constraints of strategically placed customs.⁵¹ Whereas in Chrétien these are the centerpieces of his critique of institutions, Renaut uses them to signify stages in the hero’s positive qualification. They also serve to “Arthurianize” the Unknown, by making him a composite of several of Chrétien’s heroes; like them, he is a hero of custom, supplier of defeated knights to the court, abolisher of abusive customs in remote sites, particularly as they concern a deeply imperiled feminine sphere. This progression culminates in a doubling of the supreme challenge by which the Unknown conquers an heiress and her heritage, by abolishing the Seven-Year Custom at the Ile d’Or and those customs at the Gaste Cité.

Along with customs, heraldic devices are consistently featured in each of the Unknown’s principal adventures. Although he arrives at court in the guise of a humble messenger, his shield, which “d’asur estoit, / D’ermine un lion i avoit” (73–74) [was azure, lion ermine], suggests an obscure nobiliary status.⁵² As I have shown elsewhere, the adventures on his quest comprise so many specific determinations of its ultimate value, primarily by his victories over adversaries whose shields and trappings are either blazoned or are descriptively suggestive of specific blazons. The use of heraldic details to describe the Unknown’s adversaries in some instances implies a discrepancy

between ethical values suggested by the blazon and the inferior merits of its bearer.⁵³ The Unknown's literal confrontation with a series of opponents is thus doubled by a symbolic contest between his coat of arms and theirs, and as the latter are qualified negatively by his victories, his own arms are progressively valorized. The significance of the Unknown's itinerary spanning the distance between literal anonymity and virtual sovereignty is thus heightened by the customs and the heraldic emblems that qualify positively the growth of his prowess and the nature of his achievements. Significantly, the incremental import of each of these two descriptive registers reaches its apogee at the very center of the poem, so that customs, heraldic emblems and the qualifying trials in which they figure constitute three coterminous signifying series within the quest. Together they progressively anticipate the climactic central moment of supreme *agon* and ensuing specular recognition of the hero, and ultimately they increase the intensity of this central moment by serving as indices that valorize and eventually glorify his extraordinary achievements and exalt the auspicious unveiling of his identity.

This powerful convergence of descriptive registers thus draws our full attention to the very center of the work, where two virtually consecutive specular encounters are conjoined by the symbolically pregnant motif of the hero's awakening. Guinglain's glory now seemingly at its apogee, the work could conceivably have ended here, with his marriage to this winsome heiress, Blonde Esmeree. After all, Chrétien had always made the hero's supreme adventure, what I have elsewhere called the Custom at the Remote Locus, the penultimate adventure, to be followed immediately by the ultimate and positive sanction at the end of the work.⁵⁴ In contrast, Renaut moves the supreme ordeal back to the *middle* of the poem where, amidst the festive aftermath of the *fier baiser* – which includes an animated scene frequently reminiscent of *Yvain*, featuring the heiress and her vassals entertaining the prospect of her marriage to the hero⁵⁵ – the conventional crisis suddenly erupts. Whereas Chrétien made the specular encounter the vehicle of this disruptive matter – voiced by the likes of a loathly damsel, or Enide, or Laudine's messenger – Renaut elicits it from within the hero himself, which recalls Gauvain's aforementioned propensity in other works to become involved in conflicting commit-

ments. As in Chrétien, the crisis has to do with the past. Recalling his sojourn at the Ile d'Or with the Pucele, Guinglain now realizes that it is she whom he loves and is overwhelmed by a profound, and apparently perdurable, conflict between love and duty, represented by the two women in his life. Hence his return to the Ile d'Or, where a third specular encounter awaits him.

Deferring the wedding by invoking his feudal obligation to obtain Arthur's consent – “*Ses niés et ses mesages sui*” (3606) [I am his nephew and his messenger]⁵⁶ – he dispatches Blonde Esmeree to court and heads for the fairy's realm, where he suffers alternating waves of pain and joy. Although she chastises him severely for having departed previously without her leave, his avowal of undying love opens the way to their reconciliation, though she punishes him further for his abrupt departure, subjecting him to nightmarish enchantments before finally taking him into her bed and, above all, into her confidence. Again the specular encounter plays host to an antecedent in the main narrative and, like the account given by Blonde Esmeree, it is an autobiographical story of father and daughter, king and heiress (4915–5016). She tells him that because her royal father had had his princess schooled in the seven arts, magic and divination, she is omniscient, but only Guinglain has been the beneficiary of her omniscience – and above all of her love – from the time he was under his mother's tutelage.⁵⁷ She avers that she has always known his entire destiny: that he would be a superb knight, visit her realm, yet also leave it to resume the quest she had in fact arranged for him to undertake. Her voice had unveiled his name, to soothe his pain, to bring him sleep; and it was she who spread the news of his victory at Sinaudon, all for love of him.

While mirroring in miniature the first half of the romance, the Pucele's discourse also details the hidden modalities that governed its elaboration. Guinglain had assumed that his own will and strength had mobilized him, whereas in fact he was the agent of a covert order controlled by the fairy mother who sent him to Arthur and the fairy guardian who ensured his success. As a purveyor of knowledge born of privileged omniscience, the Pucele compels Guinglain to reinterpret his past triumphs as something other than the product of his own heroic initiatives. Her disclosures alloy his prior sense of heroic autonomy with an uneasy inkling of the extent to which all of his actions have carried

unfathomed meanings linked inextricably to contexts previously unknown to him.

Her revelations also intensify his anguished hesitation between the two spheres he has now experienced, the otherworld with its maternal associations and the feudal order exemplified paternally. These dimensions are dramatically contrasted in the persons of his two female informants, Blonde Esmeree, a figure allying power with social responsibility, and the Pucele, who blends knowledge with passion.⁵⁸ Because of his surpassing valor in delivering each of them from threats to their respective realms, the hero's double – if inadvertent – bridewinning has placed him on the horns of a grave dilemma, as the Pucele's explanations make increasingly clear. By the end of her discourse the opposition becomes an absolute and irreconcilable contradiction, imposed with the force of an ultimatum. True to her fairy nature, the Pucele's omniscience and supernatural manipulations do not preclude his free will regarding a crucial choice: "E saciés bien tot entresait / Que, tant que croire me vaurois, / Ne vaurés rien que vos n'aiois; / Et quant mon conseil ne croirés / Ce saciés bien, lors me perdrés" (5012–16) [You should know, however, that so long as you believe in me, you will have whatever you wish; yet if you heed not my counsel, know this, you will lose me]. This final clause brooks no vacillation between their secluded passion and the social responsibilities awaiting him elsewhere, and offers no means of finding an accommodation between them. And despite Guinglain's immediate protestations of unwavering fidelity to the Pucele, news of a tournament – yet another reminiscence of *Yvain*, as well as of his father's characteristic susceptibility to distractions – determines his intention to depart, though without his having sought her counsel in the matter. As a result he is magically transported from the castle as he sleeps, setting the scene for a second awakening, this time in the wilderness, that signals both the end of their idyll and the beginning of his return to the feudal world. There he will assume his roles as knight, spouse and monarch; despite the fairy's warning that he will lose her if he leaves, he ultimately opts for a feudal marriage with Blonde Esmeree and embarks on a chivalric life alongside his father Gauvain. Despite these determinations, however, he is left torn between the imperatives of love and duty and his crisis remains in a state of permanent irresolution.

Thus, despite his many affinities with Chrétien, Renaut implements the specular encounter in ways diametrically opposed to those of his precursor. We saw how Chrétien characteristically makes it a vital locus for consolidating opposing tendencies within the hero and thus a source of his empowerment; Guinglain's encounters merely confront him with a deepening conflict between his love for the Pucele and the more sober exigencies of the feudal symbolic order, thereby instituting two antagonistic axiologies, each making an absolute claim on his priorities while leaving the heroic self hopelessly divided.

Renaut's pointed departure from Chrétien's use of crisis textuality as an integrative force can be weighed in terms of how each poet uses the category of the "jeune." While, as we saw, Chrétien can be critical of the volatile energy and ambition of the chivalric "jeunes" at Arthur's court, his heroes ultimately tend to harmonize personal initiatives and chivalric obligations. Renaut shares this concern with the potential for conflict between public and private spheres, and indeed broaches the issue in terms of the formation of the courtly youth: when the Unknown bids to undertake the quest for the *fier baiser* at Arthur's court, the king demurs, observing that "Trop est *jovenes*, biaux amis" (214) [You are too young, fair friend], a view readily seconded by Hélié, the messenger from the Gaste Cité: "Trop est *jovenes* li chevaliers" (235); "Trop vos voi *jone* baceler" (239) [The knight is too young . . . I see you as too young an aspirant to knighthood]. As in Chrétien's opening scenes, however, an initially negative specularization of the hero anticipates his positive exploits in the area of his alleged deficiency; this intertextual cue hints that the Unknown will illustrate the category of "jeune" in exemplary fashion. In due course, however, Renaut questions Chrétien's optimistic view of his heroes as mediators between personal initiatives and the social obligations that may conflict with them. Like Erec, Guinglain is a "jeune" who advances from a marginal status at Arthur's court toward marriage and sovereignty; his supreme conquests at the Ile d'Or and the Gaste Cité recall, sometimes quite explicitly, Erec's glorious adventure, the "Joie de la Cort."⁵⁹ Yet while the latter immediately precedes Erec and Enide's coronation amidst a quasi-mythic celebration of their successful reconciliation of love and public responsibility, Renaut has shifted this moment to the center of the poem and

doubled the hero's supreme conquest of "femme" and "fief" so as to introduce a grave conflict between duty and desire.

The sense of Renaut's refusal to follow Chrétien by bringing about, sometimes precariously, a productive mediation of private and public spheres, love and duty – perhaps even an effort to emphasize the impossibility of achieving such facile accommodations – is reinforced by the way in which a variant of the hero's conflict is replicated by the numerous lyrical interventions of the frustrated narrator.⁶⁰ This narrator repeatedly finds inspiration in Guinglain's adventures for impassioned comparisons with his own love affair and finally, in recognition of Guinglain's inability to reconcile love and prowess, makes a closing offer – pending receipt of his own lady's "biau sanblant" (6255) – to rewrite the end of the romance so as to privilege the love affair of Guinglain and the Pucele.⁶¹ Thus while Chrétien seeks throughout his works, though not always with the same degree of mythopoeic fervor evident in the ending of *Erec et Enide*, to accommodate love and duty in an ultimate synthesis, Renaut cultivates a type of fiction in which conflicting values create unresolved tensions. By thus perennializing the conflict between subjectivity and social constraints, he effectively refuses the notion of a satisfactory transcendence of the pleasure principle, creating instead a schizoid hero, one who is in some ways reminiscent of Tristan, or of the plaintive vassal torn between loyalties to his suzerain and his lady in the Occitan love lyric. Hence a major modification of the fundamental conflict addressed by Chrétien: Renaut's hero is divided essentially within himself.

Might we perceive in Guinglain's persistent affinities with the otherworld of fairydom a reluctance to enter the feudal world and a desire to cling to a nurturant sphere with overtones of the maternal?⁶² This would oversimplify his dilemma, for his relationship to the otherworld does begin to mature following the complex of specular encounters. In the center of the work he appears to enter the feudal symbolic order and envisage a positive rapport with the paternal figure of Gauvain, while also, apparently, moving beyond the supernatural mother and the fairy maiden who has served covertly as his guardian. And when he temporarily returns to the Pucele, her image undergoes a subtle transformation, from that of an enchanted being in a realm dominated by fantasy and marvels – an essentially regressive imaginary

world – to that of a partner in a potentially mature love relationship. At this point, however, she truncates the relationship in recognition of Guinglain's inability to resist the temptation of tournaments, to relinquish the ludic delights of chivalric games with his peers. This kind of reversal is what allows Renaut to explore the consequences of his hero's inability either to transcend the pleasure principle or to reconcile it fully with the realities of social responsibility.

Le Bel Inconnu thus suggests a shift, away from the kind of Chartrean fiction best represented by Chrétien's *Erec*, whose artifice of closure idealizes a fully adequate convergence of selfhood with a universal *ordo*, and toward the cultivation, in a neo-Aristotelian vein and often with ludic recourse to the devices of lyric love poetry, of the sense of an unsettled selfhood confronted with irreconcilable imperatives.⁶³ While in *Cligés*, *Yvain*, and the *Charrete*, Chrétien himself anticipates this shift of emphasis, *Le Bel Inconnu* takes it much further in the direction of cognitive indeterminism and thus highlights a transitional era illustrated by other works that display similar tendencies, among them *Partonopeu de Blois*, the *Florimont* of Aimon de Varennes, and Jean Renart's *Guillaume de Dôle*.⁶⁴ As far as our schema is concerned, however, *Le Bel Inconnu* is *primus inter pares* among these exploratory works, for it makes the specular encounter the vital accessory of a prismatic fiction that cultivates – both by its empowerment of the reader and its assertion of *clergie's* limitless capacity to rewrite – a lingering fascination with the endless virtualities of an irremediably divided selfhood.

On balance, then, although like Chrétien's romances *Le Bel Inconnu* centers specular encounter and awakening within the pattern of crisis textuality, while Chrétien seeks to harmonize private pursuits and social responsibility, Renaut supplants such a solution while polarizing feudal duty and amatory desire, creating an irremediably divided self and a state of enduring irresolution. Moving significantly away from Chrétien's fictions of heroic adequation, he takes Arthurian romance into a dialogical mode where irreconcilable categorical imperatives will forever haunt the hero, the narrator, and his narratee.⁶⁵

SPECULAR ENCOUNTERS IN THE PROSE *LANCELOT*

The fortunes of the specular encounter by no means diminish in the great Arthurian prose romances of the thirteenth century, though it would be impossible, within the limits of this study, to cover all of its many occurrences in these vast narratives. Because the early thirteenth century Prose *Lancelot* abounds in prominent, detailed instances of the schema, it will provide us with a remarkably representative array of the predominant types of specular encounter also found elsewhere in the Arthurian prose romances, though along the way we shall catch a glimpse of a few examples from some of those works as well.

In Chrétien's *Charrete*, Lancelot rushes headlong into the story, nameless, without a past, and if by the end of that romance his fame as the queen's lover is well established, his earlier life remains a mystery. A few decades later it was to be detailed progressively, in the monumental biography running throughout the Prose *Lancelot*. This was perhaps accomplished in two phases, beginning with a "non- cyclic" account of the earlier portion of Lancelot's career up to the death of his friend Galehot, and a somewhat later, "cyclic" extension covering his later exploits, including those leading into the *Queste del saint graal* and anticipating the *Mort Artu*.⁶⁶ Within this complex architecture, Chrétien's *Charrete* is redesigned as mediatory linkage of earlier and later components in Lancelot's expanded *vita*.⁶⁷ Preceding it are long accounts of how he lost his parents during his infancy, his childhood and education under the tutelage of the Lady of the Lake, his introduction to knighthood at Arthur's court, and his early adventures, including the inception of his love affair with Guenevere; it is followed by an animated succession of stellar achievements as "le meilleur chevalier du monde," as well as by a somewhat "crepuscular" series of episodes that depict his own heroic profile in qualitative contrast with that of his son Galaad, thus laying the groundwork for the *Queste del saint graal*.

Although this expansion is part of a massive project of rewriting, the *Charrete* is only one of many texts reflected in the process. For example, Lancelot's childhood follows a pattern already illustrated in the portrayals of Perceval and Guinglain: all three owe their early nurturance to a solitary female who is eventually accessory to their entry into chivalry.

Emphasizing selfhood, identity and origins, this format is akin to the tale-type of the Fair Unknown, who, raised away from society, must complete a qualifying adventure in order to discover his own identity.⁶⁸ Lancelot's formation and early career is especially reminiscent of Guinglain's in this respect: while the latter's fairy mother knighted him and dispatched him to Arthur's court, Lancelot's fairy stepmother escorts him to Camelot and personally negotiates with Arthur the terms of his induction into knighthood (xxIIa, 9–12).⁶⁹ From the Arthurian court both heroes are lured away by the urgent call of an important adventure, and both soon conquer a remote domain by freeing it from an enchantment, after which an "identitary" specular encounter occurs, from which the hero learns his own name and that of his father. Subsequently, however, the two texts diverge dramatically, *Le Bel Inconnu* exploring the conflict between duty and desire, the Prose *Lancelot* interlacing the heroic trajectory with the adventures of other heroes in the cycle. Moreover, the Prose *Lancelot* is unique in the way it redeploys the specular schema, not just a few times, as in the *Le Conte du graal* and *Le Bel Inconnu*, but repeatedly over the course of Lancelot's entire career. Through each phase of this vast biography the specular encounter serves variously: at intervals as a catalyst of the tale's unfolding; to ensure its motivation and coherence; to reveal the significance of Lancelot's chivalric odyssey; and to situate the latter within the meaningful design of the larger Arthurian story to which it is the essential tributary.

Chastoiement and Enfances

The schema occurs initially during Lancelot's formative period, or *enfances*. His infancy, like Perceval's, is darkened by feudal tragedies beyond his recall, including his father's sudden death after King Claudas had wrongfully dispossessed him of his domain and his mother's disappearance after that catastrophe. Lancelot receives maternal nurturance and early socialization from the beneficent other-worldly Ninienne, the Lady of the Lake. Like Perceval's mother, she raises the youth in ignorance of his identity and lineage (vIa–xxIa) and is ambivalent about his maturation, deferring his entry into the chivalric world yet also providing vital assistance once this moment arrives.⁷⁰

Her assistance takes the form of a particular type of specular

Fictions of identity in medieval France

encounter, the *chastoïement*, or counsel proffered by a parent or parental figure.⁷¹ Unlike Perceval's mother's more modest advice near the outset of *Le Conte du graal*,⁷² Ninienne's instruction omits upheavals and traumas in Lancelot's family and instead, when the lad is eighteen, recounts at great length the origin, nature, and ethical significance of chivalry (xxia, 7–19): knighthood grew from a postlapsarian need for exemplary men to protect the vulnerable from iniquities, men like David, Judas Maccabeus, and Joseph of Arimathea (xxia, 19). Her instruction has the didactic ring of a treatise, and is suggestive of a medieval *speculum* or “mirror” synthesizing the fundamentals of an institution.⁷³

Hence in this innovative *chastoïement* a blend of maternal counsel and a specular “mirror of chivalry.”⁷⁴ Thus she locates the hero's future within universal history as part of an institution distinguished by exemplary luminaries. While implicitly positioning Lancelot within a distinct class and order, she also anticipates disclosures that will emerge from later specular encounters concerning his inherited ancestral qualities.⁷⁵ Retrospective and historical in emphasis, her teachings subsequently acquire proleptic significance as Lancelot's career shows various reminiscences of, or contrasts with, her counsel.

Fictions of the father

As do Perceval and Guinglain, Lancelot debuts awkwardly at Arthur's court. All three encounter a degree of skepticism as to their capabilities, and Arthur fails to complete the knighting of either Perceval or Lancelot before they depart.⁷⁶ While defining a fateful itinerary, this initial sojourn betokens the lack of paternal influence, though awareness of the paternal legacy proves crucial: it launches Perceval's quest for knighthood, while both Guinglain and Lancelot learn the name of the father along with their own.

Specular encounters concerning paternity are frequent in what could be called medieval “fictions of the father.” They are well represented in the *lais*, from which two examples will provide comparative background for Lancelot's case. At issue is a youth unaware of his biological father or of his lineage, who learns the truth in an account suggestive, in terms of the paternal model, of what he must do. Among Marie's *lais*, Milun himself becomes the goal of his son's quest, while the story of

Yonec's engenderment and lineage enables him to succeed his true father as monarch. Among the anonymous *lais*, *Doon* is an analogue of *Milun*, and the pattern is also apparent in *Tydorel*.⁷⁷

In the latter, a supernatural "knight of the lake" sires two children upon the queen of Brittany and foretells that their son, Tydorel, will never sleep. He disappears, the King of Brittany dies, and the sleepless Tydorel reigns in Brittany for a decade, "gorged," at his mother's instigation, with a nightly round of stories told by one of his subjects.⁷⁸ One night, however, the queen is at last forced to reveal the truth. A poor yet wise widow tells her own son, summoned to distract the young king, to inform him that he who never sleeps is not born of man (283–94). "Par tant le feras tu penser" she says (291) [Thus will you cause him to reflect]. And indeed, Tydorel's long passivity as narratee has kept him from thinking about his origins; the people's narratives have long been the opiate of the king. The poor woman's son dutifully complies, and an anguished Tydorel compels his mother to reveal his parentage.⁷⁹ Her long account of her liaison with the supernatural knight occupies nearly one-fourth of the entire lay (357–474),⁸⁰ and gives Tydorel the awesome profile of his supernatural father.

Other specular elements anticipate this fateful revelation. The son who is an insatiable narratee meets the storyless son; both lack a father. One widow's son mirrors the other's paternal deficit and elicits his inquiry into his own origins by hinting that an excess of narrative has camouflaged the one story that could end his vigil, the one about his biological father.⁸¹ The latter had disappeared – as he had sworn he would should anyone find him with Tydorel's mother (III–12) – when a wounded knight inadvertently saw the couple embracing. Like the widow's son, this knight is an inverse specularization of Tydorel, one that links knowledge of origins with mortality. He, not Tydorel, witnesses the primal scene of the latter's engenderment, then falls ill and dies on the morrow at the same hour. His fatal discovery of the secret hierogamy that engendered Tydorel foreshadows the latter's own demise. The mother's story is an analepsis of precisely that part of his past that has so far eluded him, about his supernatural father and heterodox genealogy. It becomes a prolepsis as well when he enacts the end of the maternal story, by arming himself and vanishing into the unfathomable depths of his father's lake.⁸² If one assumes that he thus

finds his true father, this occurs beyond the boundaries of mortality, wholly apart from the feudal realm over which he has reigned in the name of a father who was not his own.⁸³

The denouements of both *Tydorel* and *Yonec* feature a specular encounter where the mother's account of the supernatural father prompts the son to perform in some way related to the paternal domain. But the two cases are quite different. Yonec finds filial empowerment, to fulfill his father's mandate for vengeance; Tydorel merely abandons his late stepfather's throne and enters his biological father's aqueous realm. Thus while *Yonec* confers sovereignty within the feudal symbolic order, *Tydorel* offers no such solution. For Tydorel, specularity nourishes no projective identification with the father or fulfilment of illustrious lineal designs. The evanescent father leaves him no functional model to emulate; he can merely re-enact the absolutely self-effacing paternal gesture. Thus *Tydorel*, in which the mirror fails to disclose the narratee's identity within a positively functional symbolic sphere of paternity and lineage, illustrates the negative potential of the type of "identitary" specular encounter optimally exemplified in *Yonec*.⁸⁴ The opposite ways in which it is developed in these two *lais* together suggest the extremes of a spectrum, between optimization and regression of selfhood, with respect to which we may now situate the principal "fiction of the father" in the Prose *Lancelot*.

The name of the father

Lancelot learns his father's name at a tomb located in the cemetery at the Dolorous Guard. This once prosperous domain had been laid waste by an enchantment, and many knights had perished seeking to abolish it before Lancelot's victory (xxiva, 1–4). Triumphant, he enters the cemetery and, in a scene prefigured in Chrétien's *Charrete*, raises the slab covering the tomb, a feat reserved for the castle's conqueror.⁸⁵ Within its dark recesses he at last finds his own name and that of his father: "Chi gerra Lancelos del Lac, li fiex au roi Ban de Benoÿc" (xxiva, 32) [Here will lie Lancelot du Lac, son of King Ban of Benoÿc]. As in *Le Bel Inconnu*, hero and father are significantly associated, and, as in *Yonec* and *Tydorel*, the disclosure concerns a dead father. But here there is no tutelary mother or mother-surrogate to specularize the implications of this discovery. Guinglain was compared positively with Gauvain; Yonec

received the paternal mandate for vengeance; even Tydorel heard the story of his parentage. In contrast, for Lancelot the mirror affords but a dim reflection. Of course at this point we already know that Lancelot's baptismal name is Galaaz (1a, 1) and that King Claudas had dispossessed his father Ban de Benoÿc (1a–1va), but Lancelot learns nothing of that here. Normally at this juncture one might expect a paternal profile or injunction to emerge, rather than this obscure hint that Lancelot's identity is significantly associated with that of his father. We see neither the prescriptiveness of its analogue in *Yonec*, nor the negative overtones implicit at the end of *Tydorel*. The enigma is more reminiscent of Perceval and Gauvain in their initial encounters with matrilineal kin in *Le Conte du graal*.

As is often the case in the Arthurian prose romances, a moment of paramount importance is left unexplained so as to heighten its enigmatic qualities while increasing the impact of its eventual clarification. The motivation of this father-son association must be unclear, so that the link between paternal past and filial future, prior to the son's return to his final resting place, remain to be charted in subsequent adventures. The empty tomb can only be filled with meaning progressively, as Lancelot's life moves toward its memorialization at the end of the cycle.

Tombs

Lancelot's encounter with the paternal name in the depths of his own tomb inaugurates a major thanatopic motif. Tomb-opening, as discovery and affirmation, recurs at significant junctures along his itinerary and thus begins to fill the lineal void left by the empty tomb at Dolorous Guard.⁸⁶ These passages remind us that medieval tombs were often objects of intense fascination that sometimes found expression in elaborate description, and also that they were sometimes represented as loci of communication or mediations of fundamental contradictions.⁸⁷ The importance of the tomb as a site of disclosure and revelation may stem in part from its liturgical prominence in the Easter trope of *quem quaeritis* and other dramatic contexts.⁸⁸ Like the mortuary monuments along Lancelot's itinerary, medieval tombs were often material signifiers of an invisible alterity, as well as a surface for inscription and a pretext for quasi-exegetical oratory. Some prominent tombs were opened and

the event recorded for posterity, as when Charlemagne's tomb was visited by the emperor Otto III in the year 1000.⁸⁹ Where the remains of saints were concerned, venality rivaled veneration as a motive for the opening of tombs and the translation of relics.⁹⁰ Sepulchral lore also turns up in Arthurian legend. According to Giraldus Cambrensis, around 1190 the monks at Glastonbury exhumed and translated the supposed relics of Arthur and Guenevere into the abbey church.⁹¹ Nearly seventy years later, Etienne de Bourbon reported that, according to local popular tradition, the tombs of King Arthur's knights – Yvain, Gauvain, Erec, and their companions – were to be found in a massive burial ground at Aleuse, in the diocese of Autun, near the site where countless knights allegedly died during Arthur's colossal struggle against the Romans.⁹²

In the Prose *Lancelot*, the tombs marking the crossroads of time and space are initially seen as positive indicators.⁹³ The tomb-opening at the Dolorous Guard gives no hint of the morbid, nor of the terror that might afflict the beholder of a tomb reserved for himself. There is instead an auspicious future anteriority: "Here will lie Lancelot, son of King Ban of Benoÿc," by which time, one might assume, the son will have lived up to the name and reputation of the venerable father.

Other Arthurian prose narratives conjoin the tomb with a specular encounter. In the early thirteenth-century *Roman de Perlesvaus*, for example, when the hero asks his father who occupies a magnificent tomb bearing the sculpted image of a man, the father can tell him only that it was already there before the birth of his father's father and that according to the inscription it will open when "the world's greatest knight" arrives (Branch 1, lines 458–566).⁹⁴ When Perlesvaus himself arrives to reconquer the Grail Castle the tomb opens, revealing the saintly body of Joseph of Arimathea and thus affirming, according to the hermits who interpret the phenomenon, that Perlesvaus is indeed the anticipated chaste knight who can reclaim the grail. It remains uncertain as to whether *Perlesvaus* preceded or followed the Prose *Lancelot*.⁹⁵ Whatever the case, Lancelot's discovery of his own tomb has strong intertextual associations with episodes in verse narratives, especially with the analogue, and probable model, in Chrétien's *Charrete*, at the "cimetière futur," where he easily hoists the massive stone slab covering his own foreordained resting place. The association of

mortuary monument with prophecy may also be an echo of *Yonec*, where the father's prophecy is revealed beside his tomb. In the light of that passage, this specular *merveille* would seem to imply that its honoree will indeed become "the world's best knight."

Lancelot's subsequent tombside encounters do progressively unveil astonishing secrets about his status and lineage, thus making these tombs privileged sites of self-reflexive revelations, whether through voices, visions, or inscriptions. In the second such instance, at the Saint Cimetiere, two tombs remind him of his earlier adventure: "et quant il voit les tombes, si li membre de la Dolorose Garde" (xxxvii, 32) [and when he sees the tombs he remembers the Dolorous Guard]. Here the secrets concern the grail. In one of the tombs lies Galahad, son of Joseph of Arimathea, hence Lancelot's discovery that he is a descendant of the guardians of the grail (xxxvii, 32). This episode is indicative of the vital link Lancelot is to provide in the lineal chain of grail keepers: in keeping with Merlin's prophecy (xxxvii, 30), he disinters and transposes to Wales the body of his ancestor and baptismal namesake Galahad, son of the agent of the grail's past fortunes; in time he will engender his own son Galahad, agent of the grail's future fortunes, thus mediating between once and future Galahads, and past and future generations of Joseph's descendants.

Yet Lancelot's heroic status soon incurs serious qualifications, again through a specular encounter: a voice tells him that he is will fail to open the second tomb, containing Joseph's nephew Symeu, who lies tormented in expiation of sin. He will be delivered one day, but only by the conqueror of the Perilous Seat (xxxvii, 37–40). This anticipation of Lancelot's immaculate son, hero of the *Queste del saint graal*, is at the expense of the current hero's own image (xxxvii, 37). Although his valor and prowess equals that of any mortal "home corompu," the voice cites his father's one adulterous sin as the impediment to his success in adventures reserved exclusively for Galahad: "Par cest pechié avés vos perdu ce que je vous ai dit, et neporquant les grans bontés qui en vos sont avés vos des grans vertus qui en vostre mere furent et sont encore" (xxxvii, 40) [Through that sin you have lost what I told you, and yet the great qualities within you, you have on account of the virtues that were, and still are, in your mother]. Unspecified at the Dolorous Guard, the deeper significance of Lancelot's association with his father

now emerges, but in a negative light, in terms of purgatorial expiation and filial inheritance of paternal sin. Hence a considerable shift on the qualitative spectrum of father–son relations, from the resplendent side of Marie’s *Yonec* toward the dark side of *Tydorel*.

This shift is emphasized later on, amidst hagiographic motifs, at his grandfather King Lancelot’s tomb (xciii, 1–23). Lancelot learns that the tomb exudes blood that heals those who touch it; the king’s severed head lies nearby, in the depths of a boiling spring. Lancelot transposes his grandfather’s remains into the tomb of his lady, whose jealous husband had slain the king, his kinsman; she herself had died of grief upon hearing of his demise. *A la Yonec*, Lancelot pays tribute to this martyrdom of love by reuniting the couple in a single tomb, though the dead couple’s story reminds us that Lancelot too had loved a married woman. However, in contrast with his carnal love for the queen, this couple had shared an ascetic, wholly spiritual rapport. Lancelot’s moral profile is again contrasted with that of the yet-unborn Galahad, whose carnal purity will enable him to dissipate the darkness surrounding the homicidal cousin’s castle since the time of the murder (xciii, 17). For the future grail hero will be “virges” and “chastes,” whereas Lancelot himself learns from his informant that he is “vilz et orz et luxurieux” [defiled and sullied and lustful], having squandered his youth in “chetivité et ordure” (xciii, 17) [wickedness and baseness].

In contrast with the “non-cyclic” *Lancelot*, these sepulchral encounters partake of the cyclical rewriting’s condemnation of Lancelot’s affair with Guenevere while anticipating the spiritual emphases of the *Queste del saint graal*.⁹⁶ Yet another tomb episode exploits a different set of tensions, between that affair and Galehot’s intense friendship with Lancelot, an obsessive and ultimately fatal devotion.⁹⁷ In Galehot’s epitaph (xlIX, 5–24) Lancelot reads of a death induced by love for him: “Ci gist Galehout li fiz a la Jaiande, li sires des Lointaignes Isles, qui por l’amor de Lancelot morut” (xlIX, 10) [Here lies Galehot, the son of the Giantess and Lord of the Nether Isles, who died for love of Lancelot].⁹⁸ To forestall Lancelot’s suicidal grief, the Lady of the Lake persuades him, as consolation, to transpose Galehot’s remains into his own tomb at the Dolorous Guard.

Lancelot’s fourfold discovery of the remote past via tombs, as well as his threefold transposition of remains – first those of Galahad the elder,

then those of Galehot, and finally those of King Lancelot – provide a highly significant array of disclosures. They reveal vital links between generations in the same illustrious family: one between the two Galahads, who across the centuries share in the lineally transmitted, spiritual brotherhood of the grail; another associating the two Lancelots, who share in the affective adventure of love for a woman.⁹⁹ Although he reunites King Lancelot with his lady in a common tomb, a different kind of symbolism prevails when he elects to lie eternally beside his beloved Galehot.¹⁰⁰ Of the three commemorative transpositions of remains, the most prefigurative emblematically of his own ultimate profile *in morte* is neither that of the saint – the ancestor Galahad – nor that of the lover – King Lancelot. It is, rather, his election of entombment with Galehot, in commemoration of a temporal chivalric bond.¹⁰¹

Self-reflexivity and the relativization of heroic status

The biographical curve is thus shaped by these sepulchral specular encounters that range along the spectrum suggested by the aforementioned contrast between *Yonec* and *Tydorel*. This progressive revalorization of Lancelot is not confined to these episodes, however, for we see a more general tendency, already apparent in the *Conte du graal* and *Le Bel Inconnu*, to place the specular encounter at the locus of a *merveille* – an enchantment or other supernatural phenomenon – as in the episode of the Carole Magique (LXXXIII, 1–10), where Lancelot ends an enchanted dance that has lured countless knights and ladies into the oblivious euphoria of its ceaseless round. The Carole also conveys, from father to son, a specular mandate suspended in time: King Ban had left his golden crown to the eventual abolisher of the enchantment who was to earn renown as the best and fairest of the world's knights (LXXXIII, 9). Indirect communication with the father again signifies contrastively, however, for after breaking the spell Lancelot casts away his father's diadem, “por ce que signe de roi senefioit” (LXXXIII, 3) [because it was an emblem of the king]. As elsewhere, in this episode Lancelot, wary of assuming temporal power, adheres to a unique ideal of knighthood.¹⁰²

Monarchy, however, is not the principal issue in Lancelot's progressive self-reflexive formation. Successive instances of the schema enjoin him to assume his destined role in the stewardship of mandates and

missions from ages past and that pertain to his doubly venerable ancestry, linked with David through his mother and Joseph of Arimathea via his father. These moments cultivate his awareness that long-standing genealogical constraints must progressively converge with a foreordained teleology involving the grail. Through these essential disclosures about fathers and forefathers, Lancelot also learns that he occupies an eccentric, fundamentally “courtly” place in a spiritually seminal genealogy whose luminaries both precede and follow him. While the schema consistently provides specular indices of identity in all of these episodes, its most remarkable role in the cyclic *Lancelot* is to offer repeated comparisons of the relative merits of two predestined heroes, one the father of the other.

Elsewhere in the prose romances the schema, perhaps in reminiscence of the negative midcourse evaluations of Chrétien’s heroes, imparts either negative appraisals or unfavorable disclosures, as in two examples from *Perlesvaus* that convey specular revelations about the protagonist’s birth, childhood, and early life. In the first, Arthur arrives unrecognized at Tintagel without realizing that this is where he was conceived. When he asks why the land around the castle has settled, a priest explains that this is because King Arthur was conceived in sin here, when the adulterous father murdered his rival before marrying the latter’s widow (Branch ix, 32). While affirming Arthur’s royal, legitimate origin, this analepsis nonetheless reveals the paternal transgression previously unknown to Arthur; this is one of several points in the romance where his realm’s background and problems are highlighted against the backdrop of a superior spiritual order associated with the grail.

Later it is Gauvain who unknowingly arrives at the castle where he was born, and again a priest explains, this time by interpreting murals. The tale recalls other tales of childhood – Moses, Le Fresne, Havelok, Milun, etc. Gauvain hears how his mother had sent her child away because he had been conceived out of wedlock. After a benevolent knight had given him gold, silver, and a sealed letter attesting to his royal lineage, he was raised by a peasant. Eventually he reached Rome, where, thanks to the letter, the pope recognized and nurtured him. When chosen to be Emperor of Rome, he refused because of rumors about his origins, the truth of which had been withheld from him. He later left Rome and became a world-renowned knight. From the priest’s

narration, Gauvain, like Arthur, learns that he was born in sin, but in this case the story affirms his doubly royal lineage, Christian education, and the eventual marriage of his parents (Branch x, 34).

These two instances of the schema recall certain *chansons de geste* that recount the *enfances* of a hero whose mature exploits are already known.¹⁰³ In another type of self-reflexivity, the schema hosts a socio-political *chastoiement* that confronts the monarch with unsettling political issues. In the Prose *Lancelot*, a *preudome* upbraids Arthur in front of the court for his shameful failure to avenge the death of King Ban, his vassal.¹⁰⁴ In the Prose *Roman de Tristan* King Marc, unrecognized, questions his shepherds and hears not only widely held unfavorable opinions concerning himself, but also lavish praise of Tristan.¹⁰⁵ Elucidations and chastisements addressed to monarchs and other powerful personages exploit the specular encounter's capacity to convey negative appraisals of individuals and institutions, and thus to emphasize values and axiologies.

This becomes a quasi-doctrinal enterprise in *La Queste del saint graal*,¹⁰⁶ where specular encounters repeatedly critique representatives of a flawed earthly conceptualization of chivalry and depict terrestrial events as divinely sanctioned operations. Adventures that befall knights-errant are subjected to detailed elucidation of their covert religious symbolism, of which both knight and reader had been unaware. The informant is typically an ecclesiastic – a venerable *preudome* – garbed in white and with access to higher forms of spiritual knowledge to be unveiled retrospectively.¹⁰⁷ This proliferation of segments of internal gloss scattered intermittently throughout the romance creates reflexive relations between the literal details of an adventure and the ensuing explication of their significance in terms of a universe of religious allegory – a kind of typological diptych, as it were.¹⁰⁸ Exposed thereby are the perils of diabolical seductions, the machinations of worldly powers, the inherent weaknesses of terrestrial chivalry, and fundamental doctrinal oppositions, such as that between the figures of Synagoga and Ecclesia, the Old Law and the New. Normally an episode precedes an explanation to the hero of its allegorical meanings, so that the fiction's literal, descriptive integument feeds a larger, essentially theological coherence. This type of "exegetical" specular encounter, here as well as in certain other Arthurian texts

of the thirteenth century, notably the *Perlesvaus*, suggests an effort to strengthen a flagging sense of transcendental verities by making them more explicit through allegorical reconfiguration of events.¹⁰⁹ This doubling of chivalric fiction and theologizing metafiction in the *Queste* betokens an insistent effort to place a fallen worldly knighthood before a mirror in which it can perceive the nature of its decadence within the maximal dimensions of salvation history.

Specular encounters in the love intrigue

In addition to repeatedly informing the hero about his identity, lineage, and destiny, the specular encounter also plays a major role at the four most significant junctures in the love intrigue: in the couple's intense dialogue prior to their first kiss; at the moment they physically consummate their love; in Lancelot's figural portrayal of highlights from their long affair; and finally, in *La Mort le roi Artu*, at the climactic moment when the wronged husband belatedly recognizes the truth represented in these paintings.

In the extensive dialogue between Lancelot and Guenevere immediately before their first kiss, the unfolding narrative marks a pause in order to recall youthful heroism in the context of nascent love.¹¹⁰ After accomplishing many brilliant exploits, some of them in disguise, Lancelot has returned to Arthur's court unrecognized, and in a private interview Guenevere unleashes a volley of questions about this knight's earlier activities, all of which he dutifully answers, albeit timorously. By asking who made him a knight – "Ore me dites, fait ele, qui vous fist chevalier. – Dame, fait il, vous. – Je? fait ele. Quant?" (LIIa, 102) [Now tell me, she said, who made you a knight. You, my lady, he said. I? She asked. When?] – she discovers that, by sending him his sword, it was she who unwittingly completed his knighting ceremony, and that at all times he considers himself *her* knight. While gradually reconstructing Lancelot's biography between his initial arrival at court and his return, this long *interrogatoire* finally enables her to identify him – "Ha, fait ele, dont sai je bien qui vous estes: vous avés non Lancelos del Lac" (LIIa, 106) [Aha! she exclaimed, Now I know very well who you are: your name is Lancelot of the Lake] – before eliciting an earnest avowal of his abiding love for her since the moment he had taken leave of her by saying "a Dieu, dame," and she had responded "a Dieu, biax dols amis"

(LIIa, 108) [farewell, my lady. . . . Farewell, fair sweet friend.]. He avers that the phrase “biax dols amis” has been a kind of charm, to inspire his prowess and amorous reveries. This poignant exchange comprises an analeptic rehearsal of Lancelot’s earliest chivalric adventures, while the kiss that closes the dialogue seals the couple’s *innamoramento* in a moment of static reciprocity, one commemorated by illustrators and immortalized by Dante in the *Commedia*.¹¹¹ In this unusual and highly dramatic specular encounter, Lancelot is both the addressee of a composite evocation of moments from his own past and the informant who affirms his participation in them. The schema is in fact doubled here, in that Guenevere finds in Lancelot’s revealing comments on their previous encounters intermittent glimpses of episodes in her own past that now take on a far more significant hue.

Following this crystallization of reciprocal love by means of a specular encounter, their long affair is punctuated by other reflexive moments, among the most graphic of which are the recurrent motif of the split shield and the autobiographical murals painted by Lancelot. The split shield is initially a proleptic device whose specular message is addressed to the queen: when Guenevere receives the shield, a gift from the Lady of the Lake, it is split vertically between images of a knight and a lady depicted on its separate halves, in order to signify, she learns, that the love between the queen and the greatest of this world’s knights has yet to be consummated, “et quant il avenra que l’amor sera enterine, si saciés que chis escus que vous vées si desjoins se rejoindra et tenra ensamble les .ii. parties” (LVIIIa, 16) [and when the love is consummated, this shield, which as you can see is divided, will recombine and the two parts will hold together]. Just as the Lady of the Lake’s messenger had foretold, this divided image marvelously bonds to configure an embracing couple when Lancelot and Guenevere eventually share their first night of love (LXXa, 35), so that, henceforth, the shield will always mirror their identity as a couple.¹¹²

Much later Lancelot, during his disconsolate captivity by the fairy Morgan, portrays highlights of their affair in murals, to lessen his suffering (LXXXVI, 21). In a day he elaborates a number of scenes, beginning with his initial arrival at court. Morgan, recognizing the images of Lancelot and the king and queen, vengefully decides to reveal them eventually to her brother, Arthur himself, and so urges the artist

to continue. Working feverishly, Lancelot “portraist de jor en jor toute l'estoire ne mie de lui seulement, mes des autres, si com li contes a devisé” (LXXXVI, 23) [working a day at a time he portrayed the entire history, not only of himself, but of the others, just as the story has told it]. His artistry enables him, rather like Tristan in the Salle aux Images, to mirror his own amatory past, and also to become both informant and addressee of his own self-reflexive specular encounter: “Au matin, quant Lanceloz fu levez et il ot les fenestres ouvertes par devers le jardin et il vint en la chambre peinte, si vit l'ymage de sa dame, si l'ancline et la salue et vait prés et l'ambrace et la baise en la bouche . . .” (LXXXVI, 23) [The next morning after Lancelot had arisen and opened the windows overlooking the garden, he entered the painted chamber, saw the likeness of his lady, bowed in greeting, moved up close, embraced it and kissed it on the mouth . . .]. This figural reminiscence of Lancelot's entire chivalric and amatory biography to date – and yet another analeptic recapitulation of the main intrigue – is in fact a retro-prospective *abyme*, for Morgan finally carries out her evil scheme: at the fateful moment of spousal recognition in the *Mort le roi Artu*, she ushers Arthur into the chamber and confirms what he correctly fears he has perceived in the frescoes; her long and detailed gloss recapitulates his wife's long affair with Lancelot as well as, once again, a substantial portion of the Prose *Lancelot*.¹¹³ Morgan thereby transforms Lancelot's euphoric self-reflexive mirror into a devastating specular encounter in which the adulterous lover unwittingly becomes the cuckolded husband's informant. She kindles the king's desire to seize the couple *in flagrante delicto* and ignites the fuse that will soon plunge the realm into a maelstrom of explosive violence and destruction. Thus the specular encounter finally brings the couple's love story to its tragic climax when Arthur discovers the affair, both in the rubricated images in the murals and in his sister's gloss.¹¹⁴ Whereupon the two principal intrigues of love and polity fatefully merge as the monarch discovers sporadic replicas of his long-deluded self, set pathetically amidst the images of forbidden delights limned in the lover's mirror.¹¹⁵

The specular encounter and cyclic organization

Among Arthurian romances after Chrétien, the specular encounter is a major accessory of cyclical organization.¹¹⁶ Among the types of cyclicity

that may relate a group of narrative or dramatic works, temporal regression in successive stages is not uncommon, particularly in certain Old French epic cycles.¹¹⁷ Related kinds of cyclic reworking of *matière* appear in Arthurian romance: Chrétien's *Charrete* is silent concerning Lancelot's biography and lineage, while the Prose *Lancelot* describes them in detail; the *Conte du graal* merely hints at the grail's past, while in later romances its history is treated at length. In the cyclification of Lancelot we have seen how the specular encounter repeatedly encapsulates temporal and lineal antecedents for both hero and reader, so as to ground the unfolding heroic biography in a lineal past and link it to the ensuing generation, thus coordinating the Prose *Lancelot* with the larger cyclicity of the Vulgate Cycle.

While the impetus for such retro-prospective cyclification by means of specular encounters may stem in part from the progressive initiation of Chrétien's Perceval by various informants, the seminal influence of Robert de Boron is also apparent.¹¹⁸ His verse *Roman de l'estoire dou graal* (c. 1200) makes systematic use of the schema in this fashion. In its depiction of the grail's origins, the specular encounter occurs in ways that anticipate its development in the better-known cyclic prose works. Nearly one-fourth of the *Eistoire's* 3,514 verses consists of specular disclosures by divine informants; they concern the past, future, and higher significance of the holy *veissel* of the Last Supper in which Joseph of Arimathea had subsequently collected the blood of the crucified Christ.¹¹⁹ The depiction of Joseph in earlier portions of the work reflect that part of the apocryphal *Evangelium Nicodemi* known as the *Gesta Pilati*.¹²⁰ But Robert moves well beyond sources, notably by elaborating Joseph's biography and lineage into a proto-romance of the grail using numerous divinely ordained disclosures.¹²¹

In the first of these, Jesus appears to Joseph, imprisoned by the Jews, and proffers counsel. He entrusts the vessel into Joseph's custody, and identifies its three future custodians, all his kinsmen who collectively represent the Trinity. Jesus specifies that those in the presence of the vessel shall partake of His company, and Joseph himself will be sustained by it. After his release from prison by the emperor Vespasian, who is converted when his leprosy is miraculously healed, Joseph and his family retreat from the world, and he receives further counsel in a series of visions. These mandate that he establish, in commemoration

of the Last Supper, a grail table; his brother-in-law Bron is to place the spiritual symbol of a fish next to the vessel; to recall the treachery of Judas, an empty seat must be reserved for a descendant of Bron and Joseph's sister Enygeus; when Joseph's family is convened, the vessel will allow only the righteous to be seated. The unworthy Moyses occupies the empty seat and is swallowed into the earth, and Jesus reveals that that place must await the grandson of Bron and Enygeus.

Further divine instructions follow. Joseph must instruct his nephew Alain, one of Bron's twelve sons, in the meaning of the Passion and his own role in Christ's burial, for Alain's son will be the grail's guardian, after he leads his siblings into the West and evangelizes the land. Joseph receives yet more mandates, having to do with the logistics of the grail's itinerary: a man named Petrus is to go westward to the Vaus d'Avaron and await the arrival of Alain's son; Joseph must teach Bron, henceforth to be known as the Riche Pescheur, the "seintes paroles" – the "Secrez dou Graal" – as God now wishes him to take the vessel; the entire family is now to proceed westward, where Bron must await his son's son, and entrust the vessel to him. "Lors sera la senefiance / Accomplie et la demoustrance / de la benoite Trinite" (3371–73) [Then shall the meaning be fulfilled and the manifestation of the blessed Trinity]. When these things are accomplished, Joseph will take leave of this world and come to eternal bliss, and his lineage will be protected (3289–406).

The purpose of the *Estoire* is clearly to identify the etiology of the grail and trace its *translatio* into the West, thus accounting for its proximity to, and contemporaneity with, the Arthurian polity. We see from the preceding synopsis that Robert avoided the straightforward narration of these developments in favor of a succession of instructive discourses by representatives of a divine addressor to the founding figure of the grail lineage.¹²² Consequently the work is less a *roman* than a fiction of initiation. Circumstances and events are of less significance than the meanings attributed to them, by the prescriptive, regulatory power that, in privileging a chosen lineage, also relieves it of its autonomy. We see moreover that the coming of the grail into this line discriminates between its sinful and righteous members. These recurrent, transcendently revealed specularizations in Robert's *Estoire* establish a propedeutic mode of narrative that will be variously

exploited in later accounts of the Arthurian *regnum* and its involvement with the grail.

A notable example belongs to the tradition also reflected in the Prose *Merlin*, a component of the pseudo-Robert de Boron prose trilogy.¹²³ This instance of specular encounter, which occurs at the very beginning of Arthur's reign, is in effect the *clef de voûte* for conceptualization of maximal temporality in the comprehensive Arthurian story. It is a major nexus for the coordination of several distinct epochs associated with the *regnum* of Arthur. According to Arthur's *enfances* in the prose *Merlin*, Arthur grows up unaware of his true parents: Keu's father raises him as his own son, and not until Arthur's miraculous accession to kingship – by repeatedly removing a sword from a mounting block – does he reveal that he is not the true father. But even at the coronation near the end of the romance, after being elected to the vacant paternal throne through the manifest will of the eternal Father, Arthur still lacks the name of his earthly father. This lacuna is filled in two manuscripts, the Estense (E39) of Modena and BN fr. 4166; in each, Arthur finally learns the identity of his parents and thus, at long last, his own.¹²⁴ Following the coronation, Merlin reveals before the assembled barons that their new king is Arthur, son of the late King Uther and of Ygerne, and thus in fact the legitimate heir. Then privately, Merlin explains to Arthur that the Round Table, the table of the Last Supper, and the grail table are symbolically associated, and he sums up the latter's odyssey into the West, emphasizing that the future of the kingdom and the grail depends on exaltation of the Round Table by a knight of surpassing merit.

Self-reflexivity here creates a deep temporal palimpsest, identifying the self in relation to biological and genealogical contexts while also locating Arthur's reign within the vast temporal span measured symbolically by the three tables. This episode comes close to encapsulating the comprehensive sweep of the Vulgate Cycle in its entirety. It also increases the cyclic unity of the pseudo-Robert de Boron prose trilogy, intersecting the story of Arthur's accession with the grail story, thus linking the *Estoire dou graal* (or *Joseph d'Arimathie*) with the *Merlin* on the one hand, and with the Prose *Perceval* on the other. Conjoined thereby are the Arthurian kingdom's proto-history and its future. The grail's westward itinerary converges with the foundation of the Arthurian polity, so as to create, in Merlin's disclosure to Arthur, a story

with multiple layers. It attests to the legitimacy of king and kingdom, as prophesied two hundred years before. This, in turn, is linked, in a much more remote past, with the founding ethic of a spiritual kind of chivalry. Finally, the allegory of the three tables unveils profound relationships between the terrestrial and temporal order and the universal *ordo*.

Equally notable here is the fact that Merlin leads the new monarch from ignorance to knowledge – a “reflexive” recognition if you will – without the king himself being in any way the agent of this discovery. The new ruler’s identity and the trans-historical dimension of his kingdom are unveiled to a mute and passive monarch. As a specular encounter, Merlin’s omniscient vision mirrors the young monarch at the crossroads where the kingdom and the holy vessel intersect. Still only a beautiful and promising effulgence, Arthur’s image rises before him, projected against a cosmic background. In sum, Robert de Boron rewrites the fiction of the unknown father as the *founding fiction* of Arthurian prose romance.

In the Prose *Lancelot* as well – the very core of the Vulgate Cycle – we find a highly consequential type of cyclicity, one instrumental in bringing the Cycle to an end.¹²⁵ We saw that Lancelot’s biography displays the cyclicity of an individual life, rising from the *enfances*, peaking in the early chivalric deeds, then leveling off in the later contrastive prefiguration of Galahad. The relativization of Lancelot’s status late in his career feeds another variety of cyclicity: the sepulchral voices of ancestral patriarchs ultimately identify Lancelot as the heir of a flawed courtly ethos and prefigure his displacement by his son. The latter will inherit the spiritual ethic represented by the line, the ethic from which Lancelot himself, like his father before him, has deviated.¹²⁶ In Lancelot’s limitations lie the cycle’s potential for renewed vitality, as heroic insufficiencies necessitate the advent of a superior successor.¹²⁷

While this logic of compensation accounts for the cyclic transition from the Prose *Lancelot* to the *Queste*, the Vulgate Cycle ends by rounding out Lancelot’s heroic life-cycle, as his death at the very end of the *Mort le roi Artu* provides a fitting occasion for reconfiguring his life as fiction. In the last scene of the last act of the Vulgate, in the sepulchral space at the Dolorous – and now the Joyous – Guard that had named

him, Lancelot is at long last laid to rest beside Galehot. Thus, long after Galahad has ascended heavenward with the grail and lance, even after the epitaph of Arthur, conqueror of twelve kingdoms, has been inscribed, Lancelot is placed in the “tomb of the strange remains” at the Joyous Guard. The epitaph names Galehot, lord of the Lointaignes Illes, and Lancelot, the greatest knight ever to enter the Kingdom of Logres, save only his son Galahad. With the change of tense from “Ci gerra” to “Ci gît” – from “Here will lie” to “Here lies” – a narrative trajectory is complete, and as the tomb is being sealed the archbishop relates “la vie de Lancelot et la fin de lui” [the life of Lancelot unto his end].¹²⁸ Like its predecessors, the tomb at the end of the cycle is a locus of affirmations; now in death, Lancelot has at last invested the empty tomb he opened at the Dolorous Guard. With the cleric’s reprise of Lancelot’s life, the *mise au tombeau* that ends the Vulgate Cycle and closes the life-cycle of its most illustrious hero becomes the locus of a *mise en abyme* of the greatest of its stories, while this tomb itself enshrines for all eternity a temporal ideal of love and chivalry.

Although many other examples of specular encounter could be cited from Old French Arthurian romance, this necessarily limited sampling demonstrates that in the context of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it serves several important functions. For Chrétien, as we saw, it supplies to the protagonists self-reflexive midcourse revelations; these are in most instances negative appraisals of their previous achievements that necessitate the second major segment of the intrigue. This design is also fundamental to Renaut de Beaujeu’s *Le Bel Inconnu*. And we have seen how thirteenth-century Arthurian prose romance uses specular revelations to coordinate historical and cyclic coherence. This selective examination of verse and prose romances suggests that as the schema is repeatedly implemented, it matures and diversifies in new, more ambitious contextualizations. Extensive use of the schema to reveal aspects of personal and lineal identity creates new pleats and convolutions in the labyrinthine complexities of Arthurian story. These glimpses of a remote past or an imminent future also add perspective to the larger narrative: as the characters’ profiles thicken within the biographical segments, the fiction also opens onto new perspectives that are both temporal and ethical.

In sum, these instances of specular encounter in Arthurian romance disclose that it may inform at least four distinct spheres. The most limited of these is biographical and concerns the protagonist's situation, status, previous behavior and, in some instances, identity itself, especially in relation to a distinguished lineage. Next there is the political sphere, concerning in particular Arthur's kingdom, its origins, and the successive stages of Arthurian civilization. A larger historical sphere extends back to the time of Christ and encompasses the story of the grail, from Joseph of Arimathea to Galahad. Finally, the schema allows the fiction to evoke the maximal temporal dimension, the eschatological sphere, which subsumes all of those preceding. One sees that the chivalric and courtly instances of the schema are ultimately related to a mythico-theological function: in the course of the successive rewritings of the Arthurian tradition, the specular encounter places its most illustrious personages on the vast canvas of universal history.

From encounter to specular encounter in fictions of the courtly tryst

In Occitan and Old French lyric of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the amorous tryst is a major locus of poetic invention, one that elicited a considerable range of conventional attitudes. If the assignation has yet to occur, the lyric voice may desire it fervently, or see it as an indefinitely deferred goal or an impossibility to be relinquished in abject resignation.¹ If the exquisite moment finally arrives, the poet may evoke the couple's ephemeral bliss or their protection by vigilant watchmen outside their chamber.² The tryst remembered may be haloed in a nostalgic afterglow, or inspire bitter regrets that no more will follow, or dejection over imminent departure for remote, hostile lands.³ And so on. These and many other perspectives on the tryst appear in medieval love lyrics, while countless variants lend nuance to each one, thus making this imaginary, sensual yet also spiritual event a powerful generator of poetic craftsmanship. In these marvels of metric and strophic design, in which tensions among various orders of duty and desire struggle for dominance, the components of eminently conventional stylistic registers are incessantly metamorphosed within the relatively conservative *mouvance* of troubadour and trouvère lyric.⁴

Old French narrative poets also saw inventive potential in the tryst. It offered them a basic situation imbued with immense powers of fascination, one fraught with conflict and suspense as well as a substantial archive of poetic figures.⁵ When exploiting this rich vein in their courtly fictions, however, they introduce significant changes, of which the most important is the depiction of an extensive *aftermath* following the tryst. In lyric contexts, the aftermath, if evoked at all, is often merely glimpsed as a melancholy, anticlimactic phase, of little or no interest

except for the anxiety awakened by scandalmongers, or *losengiers*.⁶ In the narrative *mise en récit*, however, the aftermath of the tryst is a lengthy, detailed segment that typically contrasts the rendezvous itself with the curious or incongruous developments that result from it. Moreover, this aftermath consistently links the lovers' *encounter* with a climactic *specular encounter* that reconfigures it in a wholly new light.

In this chapter we shall consider four instances where the narrative tryst precedes a highly significant *aftermath* featuring a specular encounter. All are from major works: Chrétien's *Charrete*; Béroul's *Roman de Tristan*; the Oxford *Folie Tristan*; and *La Chastelaine de Vergi*. After first examining the unique features of each example, we shall see that similar tendencies in each one together allow us to characterize the narrative tryst in remarkable contrast with its normally far less ample counterparts in lyric.

THE MORNING AFTER IN *LE CHEVALIER DE LA CHARRETE*

In the preceding chapter we saw how the night of love shared by Lancelot and Guenevere is a major center of transition that effects the work's bipartition and ushers in the crisis that begins early the next morning.⁷ For this rendezvous Chrétien has clearly taken cues from the lyric tryst, as has frequently been observed.⁸ As *trouvère*, Chrétien himself produced a small corpus of lyrics and was, as is often apparent in his fiction, thoroughly familiar with the lyric tradition.⁹ The affair in the *Charrete* shows traits of *fin'amor* widespread in lyric: it is adulterous, involves the suzerain's – here also the sovereign's – wife, and wears the mantle of secrecy.¹⁰ Prior to the tryst, reminiscences of lyric include Lancelot in emotional states that recall the lyric lover. The very thought of the queen or an object belonging to her entralls him, the more so when he glimpses her; he venerates her when he genuflects in the direction of her window (4716–18); toward other women he is reserved and provides only formal compliance with their requests for acts of prowess. When on occasion his passion makes him seem foolish or maladroit, this is never portrayed as a deleterious affliction. Despite the affair's carnality, it remains tributary to his superior chivalric exploits. Indeed, his obsession taps a seemingly inexhaustible wellspring of prowess, and his achievements while under the spell of love surpass

those of Gauvain, with whose failure his successful liberation of the prisoners of Gorre is contrasted.¹¹

Certain of the queen's attitudes also recall the noble lady of lyric. She is unexpectedly haughty and disdainful toward Lancelot after his arrival in Gorre; she toys with him at the tournament of Noauz, bidding him at first to do his worst ("au noauz," 5645), and then his best ("au mialz," 5879).¹² The night of love also recalls the lyric tryst: the bedchamber is difficult of access and provokes the lover's seemingly superhuman strength to enter; the lovers exercise extreme caution so as not to alert those in proximity; the carnal delights themselves are elided, euphorically veiled in a modesty topos (4680–81); and the imminence of dawn makes the lover's (always premature) departure mandatory.

This tryst profoundly influenced Chrétien's early successors, notably the romancers in prose who, as we saw, sought to motivate and continue the affair.¹³ In part for this reason, but also in view of its intrinsic qualities, it is well known to readers of medieval literature, its longevity ensured by the vigorous critical response it continues to elicit. It has received countless analyses, and has fed vigorous debates ever since Gaston Paris discussed the *Charrete* over a century ago.¹⁴ Less attention has been paid to one of the tryst's more important features: its anticipation of the extensive *aftermath* wherein it is interpretively analyzed and effectively rewritten within the fiction itself. After the narrative potential of the initial series of episodes has been exhausted, the tryst occasions the dramatic crisis featuring awakening and specular encounter – in the form of a confrontation between Meleagant and the queen and Lancelot – thus opening the way to new developments in the second part of the romance (4687–986). The emphasis on interpretation in the aftermath is anticipated by enigmatic details prior to the tryst. Who is this knight and what is he pursuing? Why does he accept a ride in the infamous cart? What explains the queen's coolness toward him in Gorre? Is this their initial tryst, or were there others? Will others ensue? Some uncertainties are eventually clarified, but others remain unresolved, together cultivating a sense that appearances do not necessarily conform to circumstances and often occult uncharted realms of the unsaid and the unknown.

This sense is most acute on the morning after the tryst, as Meleagant, the queen's malevolent captor, officially assumes the

conventional role of informant in the specular encounter, and proceeds to ensure a rude awakening to those he presumes were involved in the scandal. Unaware that her sheets are crimson because of the cuts Lancelot sustained forcing the barred window while Keu's reopened wounds are in fact what reddened his bedding, he charges Keu and the queen with adultery. He shows no hesitation or uncertainty, presenting himself as an infallible interpreter capable of producing incontrovertible proof:

Dame, or ai ge trovees
tex anseignes con je voloie!
...
mes enuit vos a regardee
Kex, li seneschax, mal gré suen,
s'a de vos eü tot son buen,
et il sera molt bien prové.
– Comant, fet ele? – J'ai trouvé
sanc an vos dras, qui le tesmoigne,
puis qu'a dire le me besoine.
Par ce le sai, par ce le pruis,
que an voz dras et es suens truis
le sanc, qui cheï de ses plaies:
ce sont ansaignes bien veraies.
(4756–57; 4764–74)

[My lady, now I've found the proof I've been seeking! . . . the seneschal Kay looked closely upon you last night and has had his way with you, and that can be perfectly well proven. How? she asked. I have found blood on your sheets that bears witness, since you press me for an answer. That's how I know, and that's my proof: that on your sheets and his I've found blood that flowed from his wounds. These are indeed true signs!]

The argument's accuracy is quickly called into question, for each of the others explains the evidence differently, the queen sincerely positing a nocturnal nosebleed, Kay correctly citing his reopened wounds. Meanwhile Lancelot, upon awakening in his quarters, discovers the wounds on his fingers, and will thus offer with alacrity to champion by judicial combat his compatriots' innocence.

In some ways, this specular encounter recalls others in Chrétien's romances. As in *Erec*, *Yvain*, and the first part of *Le Conte du graal*, the

crisis is sparked by a critic of the hero's past behavior. Its closest counterpart is nonetheless in *Cligés*, whose plot also features concealment of adultery, for Meleagant's misprision is akin to Alis's delusive dream. Yet this instance of the schema in the *Charrete* is unique in numerous respects. It involves multiple addressees, initially the queen and Keu, then Meleagant's father, King Bademagu, and eventually Lancelot who, in a room by now packed with curious knights (4913), hears the the queen's account of Meleagant's charges (4918–29). As Meleagant's accusation is progressively disseminated to a larger public, the fiction spins out a virtuality latent in the lyric tryst, as if Chrétien had decided to illustrate the category and function of the *losengier* with this vituperative orator intent upon exposing an adulterous scandal within a *public* forum. Moreover, Meleagant in the role of informant presents a highly ironic contrast not only with the major informants in Chrétien's other romances – Enide, Laudine's messenger, the Loathly Damsel, and Guiromelant – but also with most of those in our corpus. His appraisal is utterly unreliable, yet it plays conveniently into the hands of the primary addressees of his analysis, the lovers.

Thanks to this self-delusive informant and Lancelot's lucidity, the episode culminates in an *escondit*, or judicial dual, over a totally banal truth: that between queen and seneschal nothing transpired (4901). This combat, and the specular encounter that made it possible, provide Lancelot with an excellent opportunity to conceal a deeper truth known but to God, couple, and reader. In principle a veridictory device, the schema here generates a verisimilitude that occults the truth. The episode is also unique in creating no readerly suspense at all about how the dissimulation is arranged. Prior to the tryst the reader is often incapable of penetrating various obscurities; in its aftermath this limitation shifts to a personage who, combining ignorance with arrogance, merely *presumes* to know the truth. The reader's focus of interest is now on how Meleagant so confidently errs in his inferences. Hence a specular encounter that lingers over an infelicitous exemplar of one of its most important roles, the informant whose argument goes awry despite being founded on rational processes (a paradox to which we shall return).

FLAGRANT DELIGHTS IN BEROUL'S *TRISTAN*

This scene recalls an episode in the *Roman de Tristan* of Bérout in which awakening and specular encounter also highlight the aftermath of a couple's clandestine seclusion: King Mark, having been alerted by his woodsman, finds his queen asleep with Tristan in a hut hidden in the Morrois forest.¹⁵ The scene gives all the appearances of a tryst but in fact is only a poignant moment of the couple's long exile as fugitives from the king's sworn justice, during which, in the so-called *version commune* of Bérout, their life is frugal and harsh (cf. 1364: "Aspre vie meinent et dure").¹⁶ Mark stays the blade he brandishes over their bodies, for they are fully clad and separated by a naked sword.¹⁷ He reflects on these startling details: "Bien puis croire, se je ai sens, / Se il s'amasent folement, / ja n'i eüsient vestement, / Entre eus deus n'eüst espee, / Autrement fust cest'asenblee" (2006–10) [I may be certain, if my judgment is correct, that if they were having a passionate affair they would not be dressed; no sword would separate them; things would be very different here]. His conclusion: "De fole amor corage n'ont" (2013) [They are not inclined to illicit love]. For Mark, this moment is self-reflexive yet self-delusive. Finding proof of the couple's affair, he instead infers their innocence. Like Meleagant when confronted by persuasive evidence of adultery, he concludes erroneously, though here it is not a matter of mere traces. In some contemporary juridical contexts, the spouse's apprehension of his adulterous wife *in flagrante delicto* would justify immediate homicide, while the compelling evidence is intact.¹⁸ Yet here the sword of vengeance is stayed by trenchant self-deception.

There ensues a curious *exchange* of specular encounters founded on material signifiers: because the scene allows him to perceive himself as the beneficiary of their fidelity to him as spouse and uncle, he seeks in return to leave them a *speculum* of their innocence, again in a signifying disposition of objects, so that they will know both that he had found them and that no one will seek their death (2020–26). Hence a twofold objective, to signify his passage and *denote* his clemency. With tenderness, Mark positions his glove to protect Iseut's face from the sun, exchanges rings with her, and substitutes his own sword for the one separating the sleepers (2027–50).¹⁹ When Iseut awakens to these

changes, she concludes, as he had intended, “Li rois nos a trevez ici” [The King found us here], and Tristan immediately concurs (2088–89). Unfortunately, however, they begin to wonder why Mark had taken no action. In view of his long-standing ban ordering their capture (1431–36; 1637–43), they surmise that he has returned for help to seize and, eventually, execute them (2119–20). So they decide to flee (2073–100). They have just arrived at this erroneous pass when Tristan’s preceptor Governal rejoins them and Tristan recapitulates his reasoning in a lengthy formal discourse (2105–21).

As in the aftermath of the tryst in the *Charrete*, an interpreter sifts the evidence produced by the couple’s behavior, interpreted by a character in the fiction, though here we find a *series* of specular encounters, each eliciting its addressee’s unreliable assumption: first the king infers the couple’s innocence; then they assume his vengeance is imminent, and Tristan twice lays out his analysis of the situation, which, like Meleagant’s discourse, blends verisimilitude and error (we shall return to this passage). Hence, as in the *Charrete*, an ironic subversion of the schema’s veridictory function regarding issues arising from the tryst itself.

By this point in Bérout’s version, the alternating rhythm of the couple’s trysts and their enemies’ denunciations has been through several cycles. The pattern is operant from the very outset of the fragment, which opens “*in medias* tryst,” amidst an astonishing nocturnal assignation whose precise circumstances readers only gradually begin to infer.

The fragment begins like a play.²⁰ We hear Iseut’s reproachful voice as she emerges onto the shadowy nocturnal scene: “Sire Tristran, por Deu le roi, / Si grant pechié avez de moi, / Qui me mandez a itel ore! / Or fait semblant com s’ele plore” (5–8) [Sir Tristan, in God’s name, you’ve caused me to sin greatly by summoning me at this hour! Then she pretends to weep]. This irony and theatricality is lost neither on the reader, who immediately recognizes her feigned remorse, nor on Tristan, who at once sees their peril: “Quant out oï parler sa drue, / Sout que s’estoit aperceüe” (96–97) [As soon as he heard his beloved speak, he realized that she was being watched]. Founded on the lovers’ tacit complicity, this tryst unfolds as a dramatic dialogue conceived spontaneously and enacted for the king as he looks on from aloft, perched at the crest of the pine tree where the dwarf Frocin has positioned him

after learning of the rendezvous (469–74). Frequently evoked yet unacknowledged (5–232), the king first hears Iseut's oath, made possible at the expense of her maid Brangain's virginity and tinged with blasphemous ambiguity: "Li rois pense que par folie, / Sire Tristan, vos aie amé; / Mais Dex plevis ma loiauté, / Qui sor mon cors mete flaele, / S'onques fors cil qui m'ot pucele / Out m'amistié encor nul jor!" (20–25) [The king thinks, Sir Tristan, that out of madness I was your lover, but God can vouchsafe my fidelity, and may He lay scourge to my body if ever anyone was intimate with me but the one who had my maidenhead!]. Alluding to the king's unscrupulous entourage, the "felon" (26) who seek to convince Mark ("faire acroire," v. 29) that Tristan and the queen are lovers, she indignantly asserts her fidelity to her "seignor," again exploiting the ambiguity of variously interpretable terms: "Mex voudroie que je fuse arse, / Aval le vent la poudre esparse, / Jor que je vive que amor / Aie o home qu'o mon seignor; / Et, Dex! si ne m'en croit il pas" (35–39). [Let me be burned and my ashes scattered downwind if I live to see the day I make love to a man other than my lord. Yet, dear God, he doesn't believe me!]²¹ Nor, she insists, does Mark see the real "familial" motive behind her affection for his nephew: "Por ce qu'eres du parenté / Vos avoie je en cherté" (71–72) [You've been dear to me because you are kin]. She hastens to add that the king is merely the victim of misguided counselors, who can "Faire mal faire et bien laisier: / Si a l'on fait de mon seignor" (90–91) [Cause evil deeds and neglect of the good, that's what they've done to my lord].²²

Tristan replies in kind, excoriating the king's vile Cornish counselors and echoing her rhetoric of unjust punishment:

Dex! pourquoi est li rois si fol?
Ainz me lairoie par le col
Pendre a un arbre q'en ma vie
O vos preïse drüerie.
Il ne me lait sol escondire.
Por ses felons vers moi s'aïre,
Trop par fait mal qu'il les en croit:
Deceü l'ont, gote ne voit.

...

Ne deüst pas mis oncles chiers
De moi croire ses losengiers.

...

From encounter to specular encounter in the courtly tryst

Por Deu, le fiz sainte Marie,
Dame, ore li dites errant
Qu'il face faire un feu ardent;
E je m'en entrerai el ré.
Se ja un poil en ai bruslé
De la haire qu'avrai vestu,
Si me laist tot ardoir u feu;
Qar je sai bien n'a de sa cort
Qui a batalle o moi s'en tort.
(127–34; 143–44; 148–56)

[God! Why is the king so unreasonable? I'd sooner be hanged by the neck on a tree than get involved in an affair with you. He won't even let me exculpate myself. It's because of his traitors that he's furious with me; his believing them is doing great harm. They've deceived him, yet he sees nothing . . . My dear uncle should not believe what his scandalmongers have to say about me . . . My lady, in the name of God and the Son of Holy Mary, tell him right now to have a roaring fire built, and I'll enter the pyre, and if a single bristle of the hair shirt I'll be wearing be burned, then let me be consumed in the flames, for I know that no one at his court can walk away from a combat with me.]

His entreaties that she try to reconcile him with Mark meet with her incredulous refusals, for how could she dare broach such a volatile issue, given the king's suspicions about her? She retreats from the scene lest they be caught, while Tristan rounds out this poignant scene by abjectly declaring that he must flee, and lofts one final piety into the darkness: "Beaus oncles, poi me deconnut / Qui de ta feme me mescrut: / Onques n'oi talent de tel rage," (251–53) [Fair uncle, how little you knew me, thus to misjudge me with regard to your wife: never had I any desire to commit such an outrage].

On the reader nothing is lost of the brash cleverness of this quasi-antiphonal *coup de théâtre* in which the couple attempt, by means of a delusive specular encounter, to cinch the case for their innocence in the eyes of the king.²³ The tenor of this sublimely devious melodrama is fundamentally juridical. Here, long before Iseut's formal *escondit* under oath at the Mal Pas, the couple enact their innocence while evoking contemporaneous legal procedures.²⁴ Emphasizing their own piety and the perfidy of their betrayers, they utter formal oaths and invoke God as

guarantor of their innocence.²⁵ In the passages cited above, their usage brings to mind various types of *escondit*, such as ordeal by fire and judicial combat.²⁶ The illocutionary effectiveness of these speech acts is apparent from their persuasive impact, or “perlocutionary force,” on the intended witness, as we see from Mark’s contemplative response:

Or puis je bien enfin savoir;
Si feüst voir, ceste asenblee
Ne feüst pas issi finee;
S’il s’amasent de fol’amor,
Ci avoient asez leisor,
Bien les veïse entrebaisier;
Ges ai oï si gramoier.
Or sai je bien n’en ont corage.
Porquoi cro je si fort outrage?
(298–306)

[Now, finally, I know. If (what I heard) were true, this meeting would not have ended thus. If they were passionately in love I would have seen them embracing; they had their chance here. And yet I heard them lamenting so; now I know they didn’t want that. Why did I ever believe anything so outrageous?]

Mark’s thinking finds expression in a few straightforward formulae, variants of which he will repeat, as we saw, when he reaches similar conclusions in the depths of the Morrois forest.²⁷

The fragment ends as it began, amidst a tryst. Following Iseut’s judgment, the couple’s three long-standing enemies learn that they have resumed their rendezvous in the queen’s chamber during the king’s absences. In the last, incomplete episode of the fragment, one of the malicious trio, Goudoïne, devises a way to observe the couple from behind a curtained partition, thus transforming a major locus of the literary tryst into the focal arena of a peep show: “La cortine ot dedenz percie / Vit la chambre, qui fu jonchie, / Tot vit quant que dedenz avoit . . .” (4411–15) [He pierced the curtain and saw the room, which was strewn with flowers; he could see everything in there]. Like Mark at the beginning of the fragment, he looks on as the couple meet, and again it is Iseut who sees that they are being watched and initiates the counter-measure, this time instructing Tristan to intervene with his bow and arrow. “Par mié l’uel la li fait brandir, / Trencha le test et la cervele”

(4476–77) [He shot it through his eye, splitting his head and brain]. Before the moribund voyeur has even expired, the fragment ends in mid-sentence.

Ironically, similarities between the opening and closing trysts lend this fragment the semblance of a complete story with symmetrical initial and terminal segments. In both, the tryst provides a means of dramatizing fundamentally juridical tensions, and they frame a story that also addresses essentially those same concerns. Bérout's numerous redeployments of the tryst valorize the *témoin oculaire* as a guide to incontrovertible truth. The eyewitness bears the responsibility of detecting transgressions of authority represented by king, husband, and maternal uncle, and of perceiving guilty sexual acts. In the Tristanian world of Bérout, the trysting couple is repeatedly at the center of a bullseye, constantly subjected to the censorious surveillance of an antagonistic onlooker.²⁸

Yet Bérout's trysts also demonstrate how vulnerable to error the perspective of the eyewitness can be, especially when that eye, unaware of its own profound *naïveté*, confronts – as does Mark at the outset – a delusive simulacrum of truth. Repeatedly we see how cleverly the couple manipulate the language and circumstances of the tryst in order to deflect attention back to the beholder's fragile human judgment. And Bérout shows no reticence about critiquing human conceptualizations of divine judgment as well. In one of the longest segments, the judgment of Iseut at the Mal Pas, he uses elements of the tryst to show the susceptibility of human judgment to error and the arbitrary malleability of procedures based on a theory of immanent justice.²⁹ Once again Iseut is the *metteur-en-scène*, naming the mire-bound Mal Pas as the venue and Arthur as judge of her *escondit* and, at the crucial moment, modifying the prescribed oath.³⁰ The couple's management of appearances again outmatches their adversaries' ability to penetrate them. However, at the climax of this dissimulated tryst the viewer's desire to see the carnal act itself is finally fulfilled, though unbeknownst to that naive eye, for when Iseut receives the disguised Tristan between her thighs, she receives him not as lover but rather as transportation across the mire – hence another instance where an utterance is pertinent to two sets of circumstances, one of which occults the other.

In sum, while Bérout's perspective on the tryst emphasizes visual

pleasure and the ultimately perverse delight of seeing the forbidden, as Spearing and others have suggested, the full satisfaction of that impulse is indefinitely deferred. Each of the trysts defers the visual reality of carnal union by means of a little drama that somehow plays on appearances that lie somewhere between impenetrable secrets and mendacious illusions. While the couple is always the focal point of the malevolent eye, that perspective is delegated variously, either to the king himself or to those among the couple's enemies eager to train his eye on the scandal. The privileged reader, meanwhile, sees both the blinkered perspective of the villains and the couple's clever countermeasures.³¹ Yet Bérout's romance is no mere exaltation of the ruse, nor an exorcism of feudal institutions, nor the mythification of a type of subversiveness necessary to avoid their stifling effects.³² By blending all of these attitudes, it escapes the most trivial aspects of farce and fabliau as well as the univocal sobriety of social critique, while the ultimate act, in which the arrow pierces the invasive eye intent upon invading the space of the carnal scandal, brings us to the absolute limit of the aftermath of the tryst, the banality of death, the end of the myth of Tristan and Iseut.³³ Bérout remains shy of that end, within the potentially endless dialogical tensions ensured by the fragmentary indeterminacy of his romance.

FROM AFTERMATH TO TRYST IN THE OXFORD

FOLIE TRISTAN

In Chrétien's *Charrete* and at various junctures in Bérout's *Tristan*, the tryst and its aftermath featuring a specular encounter create paired segments depicting first the secretive couple, then an inquisitive interloper who seeks to reveal the affair. Although this type of diptych contextualizes many trysts in the ample medieval corpus of work devoted to Tristan and Iseut, the Oxford version of the *Folie Tristan* (manuscript Douce 6) reverses the sequentiality of the tryst and its interpretive analysis.³⁴ An extended specular encounter runs through the middle section of the poem, and it serves as a lengthy prelude to the couple's joyful initiation of a new tryst at the very end. At the same time, however, the main body of the *Folie* comprises a kind of allusive, analytic "aftermath" of many of the couple's prior trysts recounted elsewhere in the tradition, which Tantris the fool evocatively summarizes.

The Oxford *Folie* opens with a long account of how Tristan assumes the persona of a fool. It recalls the opening of Marie's *Chievrefoil*: the exiled Tristan sees his separation from Iseut as a harbinger of his own death and resolves to see her once again. Returning to Cornwall, he arrives at Mark's court in Tintagel, though incognito. His tattered fisherman's garb, changed voice, darkened face and shorn scalp lend him the air of a mad vagrant.³⁵ Upon arriving, he regales his public with absurd inventions and delightful lunacy. At the gate he reminisces about the abbot of Mont-Saint-Michel's wedding to a hirsute abbess. Then, dodging the blows of jeering bystanders – "Veez le fol" (250) [Behold the fool!], he frolics into the hall and over to Mark, identifies himself as a whale's orphan raised by a tigress, and offers the king his sister in exchange for Iseut, whom he would spirit aloft to a dazzling crystal chamber (271–310). Later he vaunts his cynegetic skills while systematically confusing the techniques of hunting and hawking, then immodestly extols his talents as a minstrel, all of which lends plausibility to his surrogate identity. His disguise and banter also transgress cultural and natural codes and thus legitimize that which is forbidden or impossible – celibate marriage, clerical impersonation, crossbreeding of fish and fowl, suspension of gravity, confusion of cynegetic systems, and so on. In effect, Tantris inverts the world at its very center, Mark's court, ludically manifesting a subversive principle whose earlier operations were often carried out covertly or through elaborate forms of deceit.³⁶

In the main body of the poem Tantris offers many vivid glimpses of that past, while the extensive ramifications of the specular encounter transform the Oxford *Folie*, which in essence is but one substantially amplified episode of the couple's story, into a vast retro-prospective nexus, as their present encounter, depicted in this poem, unfolds against the allusively constructed background of their adventures as told in other works.³⁷ Moreover, most of these are flashbacks to memorable *trysts*. In this middle section we find two lengthy scenes, one Tantris's public "performance" before the court (261–540), the other his private encounters with Brengain and Iseut (541–982). In public, Tantris delights everyone with his anecdotes and madcap exchanges with Mark – all except Iseut, who is alarmed by the acuity of his numerous recollections: he cites the wound he incurred when he killed Iseut's uncle, the Morholt, and tells how her mother, the Queen of

Ireland, had healed him (329–66); he reminds her of how, when he had gone to Ireland to accompany Iseut back to Cornwall, he had donned merchant's garb to avoid being recognized as the Morholt's slayer (391–408); of how, after having slain the dragon that was threatening Ireland, he was again cured by Iseut's mother, though Iseut, having matched the breach in his sword with the fragment taken from her uncle's skull, had tried to kill him in his bath; subsequently he had saved her from an unwanted suitor (416–56). He evokes their fateful consumption of the love potion (461–76), then alludes to how he had summoned her by throwing wood whittlings into a stream (525–26) – an especially appropriate recollection here, since it was the potion that had necessitated their subsequently furtive encounters.

Whereas in this public spectacle Tantris essentially recapitulates the couple's story up to the point where they first began to arrange trysts, the ensuing private scene culminates in yet another tryst. This second segment begins when Mark goes hunting and Iseut hastens away to her chambers. Tristan finds a sympathetic ear in Brengain, recalling how Iseut's mother had given her the potion and sent both her and Iseut along with him to Cornwall, and of how, during their journey, out of thirst the couple had consumed the brew (623–59). Finding herself in the fool's memory, Brengain seems to recognize Tristan, though without acknowledging it; she takes him to the queen, where he again reminds Iseut of numerous shared experiences, especially of their *perilous trysts*: of how the seneschal had stalked and denounced them (715–26); of how the dwarf had sprinkled flour between their beds, and in leaping from one to the other the wounded Tristan had left bloodstains in both, thus incurring Mark's wrath and their banishment from the realm (727–56); of Petit Creü, the little dog he gave her (757–62); and of how when Mark had given Iseut to an Irish harper he had reconquered her with his *rote* (763–76). He then recalls three episodes we saw in Béroul: the tryst in the orchard where they observed Mark observing them (777–816); Tristan's fall into a suggestive embrace with Iseut during her judgment under oath (817–34); and Mark's discovery of the couple asleep in the wilderness, separated by a sword (859–94). He also recalls another rendezvous when Mark had found them together and resolved to kill them; when they fled, she had given him her ring as they separated (941–56).

In sum, this specular encounter evolves into a litany of the trysting couple's past *encounters*. In so doing, it effects a complex network of intertextual relations between this brief work and the larger context of Tristanian fiction by providing a poetically dense, coherent digest of their story according to Thomas of Britain. These intertextual resonances in the *Folie Tristan* have not escaped the attention of critics. The poem has been identified as part of a "second generation of courtly texts," one that achieves powerful condensations of the very *materia* whose tradition it thus perpetuates.³⁸ There remains a need to consider what sort of fiction results from this intertextual *tour de force*, and more specifically how the specular encounter becomes the determining factor in its realization.

Here the role of enunciation is paramount: the very core of the specular schema is grounded in the informant's direct discourse, but in the *Folie* this feature is vastly augmented by Tristan's assumption of a role more akin to that of an oral performer who, in a courtly setting, recounts episodes from the Tristan story that in their totality evoke nearly all of what we know of Thomas's romance. In essence, Tantris's narrated recollections constitute a variant of a substantial portion of that work, one that initially, until Mark's departure, also depicts its reception by a group of listeners.

Portrayal of an oral performance based on a major romance would in itself have been a remarkable achievement, one offering interesting hints about the performative aspects of courtly literature. Such a "realistic" project was clearly not this poet's objective, however. For this is no professional storyteller, but Tristan himself: the hero and the narrator are identical, as are the couple *in* the story Tantris narrates piecemeal and the couple who share that narration. In effect, the *Folie* depicts *in extenso* the couple *encountering* itself repeatedly in Tantris's reminiscences. Moreover, this internal reflexivity also illustrates the figure of narrative *metalepsis*. This term designates interactions between a story and its narration that occur when the conventional boundary between the narrator's own world and the story he is narrating becomes fluid. As Genette puts it, in *metalepsis* liberties are taken with "the sacred though flexible boundary between two worlds, the one in which someone is narrating and the one being narrated."³⁹ The narrator may enter into his story, or the latter may interfere or intersect with the

narrator's temporality.⁴⁰ Here that boundary becomes permeable when Tristan steps out of the fiction that created him in order to narrate a fresh version of it, thus producing a *metafiction* that simultaneously frames and prolongs the fiction.

Rather than offer a pedestrian account of a couple's reminiscences about their past, however, our author takes things much further. He conceals the narrator's identity from the primary addressee of the specular message, Iseut herself. As in the aftermath of Mark's visit to the exiled couple in Bérout, Tristan is the informant while Iseut listens, and once again he is evaluating their common past; now Iseut fails to recognize Tristan, but because he knows so many intimate details of their past, she is frightened.⁴¹ Heightening the incongruity are his many intensely intimate entreaties to her. His discourse is less suggestive of the oral performer's "Oyez, seignors!" than of formulaic lyric apostrophes,⁴² whereby the lover urges his lady to *remember*, as in the soulful "Membrer vus dait" [You must remember] of verse 329 and its countless variants, with which Tristan introduces each reminiscence. This metaleptic shift between two worlds assimilates narrated or evoked past events into the present situation of the narrator and his addressee, as the fool insists that his account of their common past is authentic and that the present is but a continuation of those events. Tantris purports to be relating no madman's fiction, but a true chronicle leading up to the present moment. The characteristically bizarre effect of metalepsis is apparent here: the informant confronts his narratee with a rigorously true account of their past that she nonetheless cannot accept.⁴³ Like Meleagant, Tristan is perceived by the textual audience as an unreliable informant. Yet in this case that perception is utterly erroneous. Moreover, since Iseut is the misperceiver, the rift within the couple itself overshadows the traditional conflict between couple and society. Indeed, Mark takes thorough delight in the fool's inventive prating.

Without the recognition characteristic of the conventional specular encounter, the potential for the couple's shared nostalgia is replaced by Iseut's anxiety, which intensifies in direct proportion to the substance and accuracy of Tantris's recollections. While her memory does indeed serve, she sees him as an alien intruder into its secret recesses, while her courtly entourage sees nothing more than the fool's clever loquacity. When she finally acknowledges the acuity of his memory, she is still

unable to believe that it was he who shared these experiences with her. Instead she concludes that Tristan is dead and that an impostor has assumed his identity (963–67).⁴⁴

Thus in this metaleptic specular encounter, deferred recognition and conflation of narrator and hero create a degree of paradoxical reflexivity unprecedented among the works in our corpus. As in the aftermaths of trysts in the *Charrete* and Bérout, however, a crucial observer misapprehends the truth, while its concealment prolongs the fiction by deferring the ultimate sanction. While the latter would have been negative, indeed catastrophic, had Meleagant and Mark in his tree read the signs correctly, in this instance a positive sanction is delayed: the long litany of Tantris's reminiscences merely prolongs Iseut's skeptical refusal to accept him as Tristan, thus postponing the climactic scene of self-revelation and amatory reunion, a moment to which we shall presently return.

SECRET SHARERS IN *LA CHASTELAINE DE VERGI*

In *La Chastelaine de Vergi* the most important aspect of the tryst is its *secrecy*. Indeed, the entire poem could well be summed up in terms of the progressive misfortunes of a secret. The story is prefaced by a seventeen-line meditation on the potential damage caused by the disclosure of a love affair sworn to secrecy, thus anticipating from the very outset the tragedy that eventually results from the secret's having been repeatedly shared.⁴⁵ For in this poem, forbidden knowledge is capital that enters into a spiral of intersubjective exchanges. The move from the initial secret encounter to the moment of specular encounter with that (former) secret follows a circuitous itinerary of cognitive exchanges that leads, via a series of intermediary encounters, from tryst to tragedy.⁴⁶

The cognitive capital, however – the essence of the “secret” – is not the mere *fact* of an adulterous liaison between two prominent individuals, not the simple proposition that “The knight and the Chastelaine de Vergi are lovers.” The “secret” is repeatedly signified, rather, as a specific *situation*.⁴⁷ For around the situation of the tryst itself all of the systems of signification are tightly woven into an intricate fictive universe whose center of gravity is the site at which the couple's

clandestine encounters were always initiated. The fundamental properties of that situation are specified in detail at the beginning of the story:

Et a cele amor otroier
deviserent qu'en un vergier
li chevaliers toz jors vendroit
au terme qu'ele li metroit,
ne ne se mouvroit d'un anglet
de si que un petit chienet
verroit par le vergier aler;
et lors venist sanz demorer
en sa chambre, et si seüst bien
qu'a cele eure n'i avroit rien
fors la dame tant seulement.
(29–39)⁴⁸

[They determined that, in order to share that love with one another, the knight would come into an orchard at the time she specified, and that he would not leave an obscure corner before seeing a little dog in the orchard. Then without delay he would come to her room, knowing for certain that at that hour there would be no one around but the lady.]

Just as the Chastelaine had granted the knight her love under terms of a contract, or “covenant” (23) stipulating that his revelation of their affair would end it, the basic strategy of their trysts follows a formal protocol with respect to a certain time – the *terme* set by the chastelaine; a certain place – an obscure vantage point, an *anglet* in a *verger*, that archetypal *locus amoenus* of the tryst; and a certain signal – the appearance of the well trained *chienet*. Hence a stylized narrative routine, a mechanical little scenario based on a set of predetermined functions: the approach / the wait / the signal / the rendezvous – functions identified here as virtualities. This initial description of the clandestine ritual is qualified in terms of its secrecy, its iterativity, and also its historicity – “Ainsi le firent longuement; / et fu lor amor si celee / que fors aus ne le sot riens nee” (40–42) [They carried on that way for a long time, and their love was so well hidden that no one except them knew of it] – so that from the outset we know that, though they observed the protocol on numerous occasions, it is no longer in use. In the story that ensues, we learn *why* not. Four variants of the scenario occur, and with each new variant the story moves closer to its protracted

and tragic denouement. Hence in these varied recurrences a vertiginous downward spiral of reflexive echoes that finally return full circle to their source, and with an irremediably devastating specular impact.

The first variant of the scenario occurs in the knight's confession to the Duke of Burgundy, the Chastelaine's uncle. In addition to a terse avowal – "Sire, jel vous dirai ainsi; / j'aim vostre niece de Vergi, / et ele moi, tant c'on puet plus" (341–43) [My lord, I shall admit it: I love your niece, the lady of Vergi, and she loves me, as much as is humanly possible] – the knight, when pressed for details by the still skeptical Duke, reveals the venue and the mechanism used to initiate their meetings: "Lors li a toutes acontees / ses venues et ses alees, / et la couvenance premiere, / et du petit chien la maniere" (355–58) [Then he told him everything, of his comings and goings, of the initial agreement, and of the routine with the little dog]. This condensation of the scenario highlights its initial and terminal moments, as well as the injunction that governs its secret recurrences, culminating in the memorable image of the canine accomplice in service to *fin'amor*.

This is no casual transgression of the secret. As in Marie's *Lanval*, the lover is compelled to squander outright the cognitive capital of the secret in order to avoid the advances of a treacherous and spiteful woman, here the Duchess of Burgundy.⁴⁹ While Lanval immediately makes this rash expenditure when Arthur's queen tries to seduce him, the knight discreetly parries the Duchess's entreaty with a polite but firm refusal in the name of loyalty to his lord (88–98).⁵⁰ The secret thus remains intact at this juncture, but soon becomes vulnerable through a series of exchanges that lead to its unveiling: abed with her husband, the offended Duchess calumniously alleges the knight's improper advances (103–43); incensed, the Duke confronts the knight with this accusation. When the latter protests his love for someone else, the Duke allows him either to prove his love beyond doubt or be banished from the domain (144–267).⁵¹ Hence a dilemma of unequal proportions: either reveal the truth and risk alienating the Chastelaine should she learn of his betrayal, or conceal it and lose *both* lady and the right to remain in the land (268–83). The knight takes the former risk, naively confident that the Duke will forever keep the secret (316–22). In order to enhance the plausibility of his declaration, he combines a blunt avowal with details of how their trysts always begin.

After the initial “tellings” about the trysts, first by the narrator, then in the first variant by the knight, the second variant involves “showing” as, vastly expanded, the adulterous ritual becomes the fiction’s intensely visual centerpiece. In *Lanval* the fairy’s appearance sufficed to persuade Arthur of the knight’s innocence. Here the ever-skeptical Duke must observe at close range the initiation and the conclusion of the tryst and hear the lovers’ conversation. Only first-hand witness, and not verbal testimony, suffices to establish proof. In place of the trial in *Lanval* we find a command performance of the tryst itself, as the Duke joins the ranks of Meleagant, Bérout’s Mark, and his motley courtiers, all of whom are eager to lay their eyes, if not on the tryst, then at least on signs that it occurred. To meet the Duke’s need to *see* in order to believe (359–65), the four-line *abbreviatio* of the scenario provides the infra-structure for 103 verses of *amplificatio* in strict adherence to its framework (374–476). Both the Chastelaine’s uncle and the reader are now recast in the role of nocturnal voyeurs,⁵² in a passage laden with intertextual reminiscences: of King Mark, that other avuncular spy, and of the importunate arrival of daybreak in the lyric *aube* (450–60).⁵³

Heretofore evoked only as a virtuality or in terms of past occurrences, the scenario now expands into the main fiction as the kind of assignation celebrated in countless lyrics, creating a quasi-mythic interlude of *fin’amor*,⁵⁴ though paradoxically: while the profusion of exquisite sentiments is rendered all the more poignant by the irremediable insufficiency of time, this idyll is violated by the lover’s transgression of the most sacred of all conventional constraints, sworn secrecy, and twice, moreover, first verbally, then theatrically. As the Duke becomes a secret-sharer with the knight, it is ironically appropriate that his approval of the knight’s “demonstration” should be couched in terms of a lover’s declaration: “puis li a dit: ‘Je vous creant / que toz jors mes vous amerai / ne ja mes jor ne vous harrai, / quar vous m’avez de tout voir dit / et ne m’avez de mot mentit’” (492–96) [Then he said to him: I promise you that ever henceforth I shall be your friend and never despise you, for you have told me the whole truth, and not a single lying word]. For the Duke’s pledge of secrecy is predicated on the knight’s abrogation of the same pledge, one that he, too, had made as a lover’s declaration, to the Chastelaine. Ironically, as the public sphere begins to impinge on an idyll of private life, the contractuality of

reciprocal love that bound Chastelaine and knight now binds knight and suzerain.

Yet this cognitive reciprocity is truncated by the third variant of the scenario, as the Duke in his turn is forced to exchange the secret with the Duchess, in return for her good will and serenity. When she senses that her husband has learned from the knight the truth about her calumny (541–49), her cunningly manipulative “engin” quickly overcomes the Duke’s resistance (558). Having lured him into amorous overtures, with tears and sighs she suddenly feigns acute distress, accuses him of no longer loving her because he is withholding information from her, declares her inability henceforth to trust him as she formerly had, and observes that *she* has never withheld anything from him (588–629). Thus she gradually manipulates her beleaguered spouse into a moral hammerlock: revelation of that which he has by prior oath sworn to secrecy has now been made to seem an imperative moral obligation.⁵⁵ Having obtained her solemn promise never to reveal the “secret,” on pain of death (641–44), he tells all, in the now familiar reflexive terms of the scenario –

. . . puis li conte
de sa niece trestout le conte,
comme apris l’ot du chevalier,
e comment il fu el vergier
en l’anglet ou il n’ot qu’eus deus,
quant li chienés s’en vint a eus;
et de l’issue et de l’entree
li a la verité contee,
si qu’il ne li a riens teü
qu’il i ait oï ne veü.
(649–58)

[Then he tells her the whole story of his niece, as he had learned it from the knight, and of how he was in the corner of the orchard alone with him when the little dog came to them, and he told the truth about his entry and departure, withholding nothing of what he had seen and heard.]

Now cognizant of the mechanism through both telling *and* showing, the Duke details it with a degree of precision that rivals the narrator’s original description.

In the fourth and final variant, the scenario is maliciously delivered back to the secret's originator, with disastrous consequences.⁵⁶ Having wormed the secret out of her spouse, the Duchess is irate that the knight should love "plus bassement" than herself (660) and hastens to inform the Chastelaine that she knows about the liaison. This too occurs with reference to the scenario, though not in the discursive fashion employed heretofore, but in a deft, and far more deadly, understatement:

"Chastelaine, soiez bien cointe,
quar bel et preu avez acointe."
Et cele respont simplement:
"Je ne sai quel acointement
vous penssez, ma dame, poir voir,
que talent n'ai d'ami avoir
qui ne soit del tout a l'onor
et de moi et de mon seignor.
— Je l'otroi bien, dist la duchesse,
*mes vous estes bone mestresse,
qui avez appris le mestier
du petit chienet afetier.*"
(707–18; my emphasis)

[“Chastelaine, now make yourself smart, for you’ve taken up with a fine and handsome fellow!” And she replied in all innocence: “I don’t know what sort of ‘acquaintance’ you’re getting at, my lady, honestly, for I have no desire to befriend any man who would not do honor to myself and my husband. I grant you that, said the Duchess, *but you are a fine teacher, to have gotten the knack for training that little dog!*”]

At last, *en filigrane*, the stylized ritual of encounter suddenly becomes a specular encounter, as an unmistakable detail from the Chastelaine’s supposedly private life rolls off the Duchess’s venomous tongue.⁵⁷ Set in the opulent surroundings of the Duke’s palatial reception, this moment is, *avant la lettre*, quasi-Proustian in its depiction of the vicious allusiveness of aristocratic snobbery. Yet, like the grin which is all that remains of the Cheshire cat in *Alice in Wonderland*, the specular story has become a mere shadow of itself. Nothing remains of it except the little dog, while its mistress’s alleged skill in training the creature becomes a metaphor *in absentia* of her clever dissimulation of the couple’s trysts. The euphemistic phrase “Chienet afetier” is here an overcoded, highly esoteric connotator, suggestive of the same

kind of allusive insiders' shorthand for designating the lovers' assignation that "faire cattleya" becomes for Swann and Odette in Proust's novel.⁵⁸

Successive reminiscences of the tryst as initially described create a leitmotif measuring the secret's gradual progress toward revelation, while also linking reflexively the initial situation of encounter and the fatal locus of specular encounter. Among other deftly blended components in this *conjointure* is the consistent recourse, each time the "secret" information is exchanged, to the illocutionary act of promising, followed soon thereafter by abrogation of the fiduciary contract created by the vow.⁵⁹ Initially, the secret's integrity depended solely on the knight's fidelity to the Chastelaine's injunction to secrecy. A similar intersubjective pact subsequently occurs twice, in the Duke's solemn vow that even pulling teeth would not elicit the truth from him – "Cuidiez vous, se me disiiez / vostre conseil celeement, / que jel deïsse a nule gent? / Je me leroie avant sanz faute / trere les denz l'un avant l'autre." (318–22) [Do you really believe that if you told me your secret in confidence I'd breathe a word of it to anyone? I'd sooner have my teeth pulled, one at a time!] and in the Duchess's self-appraisal as a paragon of confidentiality: "et sachiez que mout me merveil: / ainc n'oïstes grant ne petit / conseil que vous m'eüssiez dit, / dont descouvers fussiez par moi; / e si vous di en bone foi, / ja en ma vie n'avendra" (624–29) [I'll tell you, I'm astonished! You've never heard that I've revealed any secret, big or little, that you've told me; and I'm telling you on my honor that that will never happen in my lifetime!]. The secret thus follows a well-worn path strewn with broken vows. The recurrence of perjured vows never becomes monotonous, however; it is motivated ever artfully, such as in the quasi-Corneillian dilemma the Duke sets before the knight or in the Duchess's devious wheedling of her spouse. We also see that the confidential exchange of a secret is concomitant with an exchange of power. For the secret-holder is doubly empowered, to disclose it and to exact the same vow of absolute confidentiality originally demanded by the Chastelaine.⁶⁰ Following this fivefold displacement of the little scenario, the Chastelaine assumes the stellar role in the analytic aftermath of the trysts and their retellings. In the concluding section we shall return to this remarkable scene of defective reasoning and its role as the catalyst of tragedy.

THE ANALYTIC SPECULAR ENCOUNTER IN THE
AFTERMATH OF THE TRYST

In the four works just examined, the specular encounter develops in a wholly new way. Whereas in most instances its disclosures are reliable, these four texts variously place this principle into question.⁶¹ These reflections on the tryst all feature ludic disruptions of the schema's basic properties, often as a result of aberrant reasoning, so that the aftermath rivals the tryst itself as an arresting poetic invention. Moreover, all four of our examples incorporate the same figure of reasoning, *abduction*, or *hypothesis*, and in each case it is the infelicity of this figure that commands the poet's attention and determines the intricacy and meaning of the episode.

In the *Charrete*, Meleagant well exemplifies this type of aberrant reasoning. His self-delusion ironically protects the couple's secret, yet it conforms to the figure of abduction, or hypothesis, whereby from a *given set of circumstances* reasoning proceeds through a *general rule* in order to identify the *case* that produced them.⁶² Hence an argument whose organization has affinities with the ternary rhythm of a syllogism.⁶³ First, he cites astonishing evidence – the bloodstains on both beds. Then he produces a general – and misogynistic – proposition concerning women kept under surveillance: “Bien est voirs que molt se foloie / qui de fame garder se painne, / son travail i pert et sa painne; / qu'ainz la pert cil qui plus la garde / que cil qui ne s'an done garde” (4758–62) [It's very true that he who takes the trouble to keep tabs on a woman is a fool; it's a waste of time and effort. And he who keeps her under closer scrutiny loses her sooner than he who keeps no watch at all]. He then concludes with the case: “Kex, li seneschax, mal gré suen, / s'a de vos eü tot son buen.” (4765–66) [Kay, the seneschal, has had his way with you]. Meleagant's thought is dialectical here: curious circumstances awaken his desire to find the case that explains them, but to do this he needs as the middle term in his argument a general rule to legitimate his conclusion. This is his anti-feminist proposition about the futility of keeping tabs on a woman, a middle term that expresses only his own opinion and not a universal truth.⁶⁴

As Meleagant orders that the evidence in the chamber not be disturbed, we may recall recognition scenes in detective fiction, where

abduction figures prominently.⁶⁵ Yet here we see how effectively it could serve in courtly romance, though with emphasis on its vulnerability to misapplication.⁶⁶ Meleagant's initial physical abduction of the queen is now upstaged by this *cognitive* abduction by which he seeks, using a mechanism of inference, to condemn her.

In so doing, however, he dramatizes an instance of flagrantly specious logic, for his syllogism in no way explains the circumstantiality he seeks to demonstrate. He construes his analysis as incontrovertible because he assumes it rests upon what he calls "ansaignes bien veraies," or "true signs" (4774). He emphasizes sensory perception, witness the verbs *veoir* and *apercevoir*, played off against the homophony in *voir*, "true", throughout his discourse (e.g., 4795, 4798, 4800, 4801, 4811, 4812, 4820, etc.); he even enlists his father, King Bademagu, as a witness reliant on sense-perception to prove the case: "Or i alons, si le verrai, / fet li rois, que veoir le voel: / le voir m'an apprendront mi oel" (4826–28) [Let us go there, said the king. I want to see this: my eyes will teach me the truth]. Yet in weighing circumstantial evidence, Meleagant takes his own plausible opinion as being universally incontrovertible.⁶⁷ Adultery committed by the queen and the man with seeping wounds could indeed leave bloodstains in both beds, but the reader knows that other circumstances obtain.

Authorial complicity maximizes the reader's appreciation of Meleagant's error. Unlike the detective novel that keeps the reader in the dark, the mystery behind this scene is resolved in advance, so that the reader or listener may fully savor the flawed argumentation. Ironically, this sophistical argument entails an *escondit*, judicial combat – yet another dialectical structure – for which the oaths concern a case that occults the truth: Lancelot is fully prepared to shed his own blood to prove that none of Kay's was shed in the queen's bed, thus finessing the question of his own bloodshed there. This corporeal sophistical debate shows how apparently rational utterances can influence events without closing the gap between the true and the merely plausible.

Meleagant's defective abduction is in many ways comparable with the flawed inferential behavior that mars – while immeasurably enhancing the interest of – the aftermaths of trysts in our other three works. In Bérout, the trysting couple assume the informant's role, but only inadvertently, because they are clad and separated by a sword, while

Mark, also inadvertently, is the deluded addressee.⁶⁸ Once again, the adultery is occulted, and Mark's rejection of homicide stems from an inferential abduction. Like Meleagant, he hypothesizes about the startling *results* of this tryst: those curious features that first attract his attention – a naked sword separates the fully clothed sleepers – and this detail prompts him to formulate a *general rule*: “Bien puis croire, se je ai sens, / Se il s'amasent folement, / ja n'i eüsient vestement, / Entre eus deus n'eüst espee, / Autrement fust cest'asemblee” (2006–10) [I may be certain, if my judgment is correct, that, if they were having a passionate affair they would not be dressed; no sword would separate them; things would be very different here]. Hence the solution of the *case*: “De fole amor corage n'ont.” (2013) [They are not inclined to illicit love.]

While Mark's thought and not his sword prevails here, this refutation of his prior assumption is erroneous. The clothing and sword *could* be signs of chastity, but he errs as did Meleagant by basing his middle term on mere opinion. Thus from the true situation, adultery and deceit, he erroneously hypothesizes his deceivers' innocence. Moreover, his defective reading of non-verbal signs conditions a new, clement attitude that he attempts to signify by an arrangement of objects, in “such a demonstration” (*tel demostrance*)⁶⁹ that upon awakening they will know “with certainty” (*certainement*) that he intends clemency.⁷⁰ And Iseut indeed, noting the new arrangement of objects, formulates the correct middle term – that they belong to the king – hence the case: “Li rois nos a trovez ici” (2088) [The King found us here], an abduction immediately ratified by Tristan (2089). But as to why Mark left these signs, Tristan errs abductively in assuming that, in view of the royal ban ordering their capture, Mark came to seize and, eventually, to execute them.

As to why the King left without seizing them, Tristan names as the middle term – the “efficient” or explanatory cause⁷¹ – the fact that Mark was alone and went to seek help. In total conflict with Mark's intent, the couple evaluate the occurrence correctly, but then decide erroneously that their only recourse is to flee. On Govenal's return, Tristan recapitulates the formal phases of his inference for his “mestre,” from circumstantial evidence to case through a speculative middle based only on probability. Like Meleagant, he propounds his analysis of

From encounter to specular encounter in the courtly tryst

the evidence to an “audience” – Gouvenal here being analogous to Bademagu – and again the analyst misreads the evidence:

Par foi, mestre, Marc li gentis
Nos a trovez ci endormis;
S'espee lait, la moie enporte;
Felonie criem qu'il anorte.
Du doi Yseut l'anel, le buen,
En a porté, si lait le suen;
Par cest change poon parçoivre,
Mestre, que il nos veul deçoivre;
Quer il ert seus, si nos trova,
Poor li prist, si s'en torna.
Por gent s'en est alé arrire,
Dont il a trop et baude et fire;
Ses amerra, destruire veut
Et moi et la roïne Yseut;
Voiant le pueple, nos veut prendre,
Faire ardoir et venter la cendre.
Fuion, n'avon que demorer.
(2105–21)

[By my faith, Master, the noble Mark found us here asleep; he left his sword, took mine away; I fear he's gone to counsel our betrayal. From Iseut's finger he took a ring and left his own. By this exchange we may perceive, Master, that he seeks to catch us; for he was alone, found us, became afraid, and went away. He's gone back for help, of which he has plenty, bold and fierce. He'll bring them back, for he seeks to destroy both the queen and me; he wants to burn us before the people and scatter our ashes to the winds. Let us flee, we have no time to lose.]

Tristan names the final cause based on the king's assumed state of mind, defines the case, and draws the grim conclusion. In so doing, he reiterates what the reader already knows. Why this rewriting of fiction as aberrant analysis? No doubt to emphasize the irony of defective communication despite the best of intentions and complete faith in the univocal signifying potential of objects, but also to suggest a flawed demonstration by pupil to master – “Par cest change poon parçoivre, Mestre . . .” As in the scene from the *Charrette*, the reader can readily perceive the discrepancy between the true circumstances of the case and the hypotheses that mercilessly deconstruct it. One sees the potential

interest and pleasure such passages might have held for the cleric trained in argumentation.

In the Oxford *Folie Tristan*, the queen is again the addressee of the specular message while Tristan, her informant, purveys a true message that she nonetheless cannot apprehend except as evidence of his imposture; the court, meanwhile, hears and dismisses the truth of adultery as the voice of madness. Tristan initially recapitulates the couple's early escapades for both Iseut *and* Mark, yet remains unscathed because his disguise guarantees that all except Iseut and Brangain will see them as the ravings of a lunatic. His appearance and bearing allow him to make an unadorned public disclosure of the truths – “Reis, 'fet li fols, 'mult aim Ysolt. / Pur lu mis quers se pleint e dolt'” (315–16) [King, said the fool, I love Iseut very much. For her my heart aches and cries out.] thanks to the concealment of his own identity: “Jo suis Trantris ki tant l'amai / E amerai tan cum vivrai'” (317–18) [I am Trantris who loved her so, and shall love her as long as I live]. Hence a bifocal specular encounter, to the king's delight and the queen's distress: “Isolt l'entent, del quer suspire, / Vers le fol ad curuz e ire: / 'Ki vus fist entrer ceenz? / Fol, tu n'es pas Trantris, tu menz'” (319–22) [Iseut hears him and sighs deeply, and feels cross and angry with the fool: Who ushered you in here? Fool, you're not Trantris, you lie!].

In Chrétien and Béroul the queen merely witnesses an erroneous interpretation; here *she* produces it, abducting from the fool's bizarre accuracy, through the rule that only Tristan, Brangien, and herself knew these truths, to the incorrect case: “Fol, tu n'es pas Trantris, tu menz”, i.e., you are not my authentic “Trantris,” my true partner in the deceits of yore. This hypothesis emerges a third of the way through the text, then in the denouement leads to despair, when she asserts that Tristan is dead (967).

Some readers assume that Tristan returns to court in disguise so as to reveal himself to Iseut alone and that this backfires when she, too, fails to recognize him; others argue that he wanted to “test” her love for him.⁷² Neither is the true motive. At the outset he believes that he will soon die for love of Iseut, but that is of less importance to him than that she should *know* he is dead: “Quant il pert la reïne Ysolt, / Murir desiret, murir volt, / Mais sul tant ke ele *soüst* / K'il pur la sue amur murrust. / Kar si Ysolt sa mort *saveit*, / Siveus plus suëf en murreit.

(19–24) [Because he is losing Queen Iseut, he longs for death, desires it, but only provided that she *know* that he be dead for love of her. For if Iseut *knew* of his death, his passing would be so much easier]. His twofold objective – that he make her *know* he is dead and that *he know that she knows* this – accounts for his visit to Tintagel in a fool's guise. For how better to let her *know* the real Tristan is dead than by convincing her that he is not Tristan but an impostor? The “fool” thus allows her to assume the worst – had he perhaps gotten the couple's story from Tristan before the latter had died? – until finally she sees Tristan's ring and infers the worst case scenario: “*Mais or sai jo ben k'il est mort*” (967) [*But now I know that he's dead*]. Whereupon, having thus proved that she is faithful – “enterine” (972) – even when he no longer exists, Tristan reveals himself in his normal voice.⁷³ In sum, the object of the hero's quest in the Oxford *Folie* is to persuade the heroine that he is dead, that is, to elicit her erroneous abduction during this extended retrospective aftermath of their many trysts. Despite its ludic qualities, this enterprise, conceived at the outset of the poem and realized at its very end, is suggestive of narcissistic curiosity and cognitively motivated voyeurism: Tristan desires the impossible, which is to *see* his beloved in the throes of grief when she is finally certain of his demise.

In *La Chastelaine de Vergi* multiple informants relay the truth about adulterous trysts, thus liquidating the couple's secret. Among the successive secret-sharers, the one most empowered by forbidden knowledge is the Duchess who, turning the specular encounter into a weapon, unleashes the canine evidence upon its originator, thus setting into motion a tragic chain of events. This moment is unique in our post-tryst specular encounters; it is by far the most succinct, its addressor the most malicious, and it generates the most monstrous misapprehension of fact. Here the victimized Chastelaine is in the stellar role as she seeks to penetrate the enigma of how her secret must have become a scandal. With magnificent eloquence, she fails to account for the Duchess's apparently intimate familiarity with the canine mechanism of her trysts. She reasons according to an impeccable formal abduction:

- a. curious circumstances: “et dist: ‘Ha! sire Deus, merci! / que puet estre que j'ai oi, / que ma dame m'a fet regret / que j'ai afetié mon chienet?’”

(733–36) [and said: Ah, Lord God, have mercy! What can this be that I've heard, that my lady chides me *for training my little dog?*]

- b. rule: “Ce ne set ele par nului, / ce sai je bien, fors par celui / cui j'amoie . . .” (737–39) [I know very well that she could have heard that only from the one I loved . . .], i.e., only the knight knew the truth.
- c. case: “. . . et trahie m'a; / ne ce ne li deïst il ja / s'a li neüst grant acointance, / et s'il ne l'amast sanz doutance / plus que moi cui il a trahie. / Bien voi que il ne m'aime mie, / quant il me faut de couvenant” (739–45) [. . . and he betrayed me. He would never have told her that had he not been on very intimate terms with her and no doubt loved her more than me, whom he betrayed. I see perfectly well that he doesn't love me, because he has broken his vow].

Although formally correct, her reasoning is specious in the extreme. She accounts for the bizarre fact that the Duchess somehow knows about the canine sentinel on the assumption that only the knight was privy to the canine routine, construing as the case that the knight has betrayed her. Since he would have revealed the secret only in the strictest intimacy, he loves the Duchess and not her. As in our previous examples of abduction, her hypothesis is vitiated by a middle proposition based on conjecture, and is thus founded on mere *logica probabilis*, not on the universally valid proposition of a true hypothesis.

This moment of false *anagnorisis* emphasizes the frailty of human reasoning and its vulnerability to error through misperception of truth in the merely plausible. For the secret's itinerary is much longer than she assumes, and it returns to her in an elliptical, cryptic form, with no inventory of its stops. We see how, in the aftermath of a tryst, the specular encounter offers immense potential for renewal of narrative momentum. (Mis)recognition activates a cascade of secondary specular aftershocks, and each is predicated on the same indicial detail of the tiny canine. First the Chastelaine expires, following a prolix monologue replete with metaphysical responses to her interpretive misprision and assumed betrayal by the knight (733–834). Then the knight, having learned that the Duchess “d'un *chienet* la ramposna / dont li corouz li vint morteus” (880–81) [ridiculed her about a *little dog*, and her distress was fatal], recognizes the ghastly consequences of his betrayal and does himself in with his own sword. Finally, the Duke is spared none of the

grim details, neither “comment l’a fere ert commencié, / neïs du *chienet afetié* / dont la duchoise avoit parlé” (907–09) [how the matter had begun, nor the *little trained dog* about which the Duchess had spoken]. He correctly infers the Duchess’s betrayal and summarily dispatches her before his horror-stricken guests, who then hear his public account of the whole affair.⁷⁴ What began as an amatory idyll seems in retrospect but a futile “illusory utopia.”⁷⁵ Private life succumbs to intersubjective and social interference, while amatory reciprocity, though contractually instituted, is foiled by competing, mutually exclusive value systems governing human relations. Ironically, the secret’s sworn custodian becomes the story’s first narrator, guaranteeing its notoriety and thus also its longevity.⁷⁶

We have seen how four major works each combine one or more trysts with an “aftermath” in which a specular encounter reflexively, and often ironically, plays host to an analysis of evidence of the couple’s behavior. While in lyric a single voice reflects on the tryst, these narratives contrast it from frequently discrepant points of view that emerge in its aftermath. The descriptive *circumstantiae* of the tryst are in effect rewritten, in a specular encounter involving an effort to interpret the scandal or, through persuasive or delusive tactics, to neutralize its scandalous aspects. After we witness Lancelot’s night with the queen toward which all of the story’s erotic energy has thus far been directed, Meleagant “analytically” reconstructs it according to an erroneous hypothesis, laying bare the inferential process and its vulnerability to error. In the Oxford *Folie* the specular encounter is a serialized mosaic of Thomas’s romance woven into the fool’s narration, while at the beginning of the Bérout fragment, the tryst is simultaneously “re-written” by the couple as a specular drama. In *La Chastelaine de Vergi*, finally, the redundant circumstantiality of an indeterminate number of earlier trysts is repeatedly evoked, each time from the point of view of a different character.

These “analytic” specular encounters suggest that in addition to its appeal as a locus for the development of affective and erotic themes, the narrative tryst was of particular interest as a generator of epistemological attitudes toward it. These analyses are performed by characters who nurture personal motives either to expose the scandal or to keep it

from erupting. The specular encounter thus unfolds in a vivid character-study featuring erroneous reasoning driven by conflicted axiologies and the passions they spawn. Evidence of the couple's passion engenders secondary passions with regard to it, as well as contentious valorizations of the local knowledge it has fed. Albeit erroneous, this knowledge may empower its purveyor to the detriment of private freedom and autonomy, while furthering ambitious, often nefarious, political or social agendas. At the moment of specular encounter, cognitive processes become more significant and consequential than events. Hermeneutic engagement with the obdurate enigma attains the level of a crisis, as interpretations, or attempted interpretations, of the couple's secret touch the descriptive layers surrounding its fragile integrity, either to protect them or to peel them away, only to become entangled in misapprehensions.

In service to new emphases, the specular encounter ceases to offer reliable revelations and instead defines an area of hazy uncertainty in which the value of perceptions is relativized, while the pleasure of the fiction is increased by augmenting its enigmatic qualities and diversifying points of view. The schema hosts varying degrees of misprision and highlights the vagaries and foibles of human reasoning. Its depiction of interpretive and communicative infelicities is consonant with significant developments, in both literary and intellectual spheres, that are sporadically evident during the first half of the twelfth century. While in early hagiographic and epic contexts transcendental truths are periodically commemorated through the meanings attributed to specific acts,⁷⁷ and major events, such as epic battles, are typically evaluated according to clear, stable moral oppositions,⁷⁸ early verse romance shows a tendency, well exemplified by Bérout and Chrétien, to weigh issues and events in terms of a polyvalent array of perspectives, as in these "post-tryst" analyses based on reasoning and inference. In contrast with specular appeals addressed to saints or epic heroes concerning univocally valorized events, these deployments of the schema incorporate a plurality of cognitive perspectives with regard to circumstances. Unlike revelation and intuition, which both provide direct access to understanding and were by and large respected during the Middle Ages as immediate and certain cognitive pathways,⁷⁹ these scenes feature more fragile cognitive

processes that proceed only indirectly and gradually from ignorance to knowledge.⁸⁰

The emergence of multivalent perspectivism in romance is contemporaneous with a renewal of interest in the cognitive dimension of discourse among scholastic philosophers, kindled in part by the restitution in its entirety of Aristotle's *Organon* during the 1130s, a major intellectual achievement whose repercussions extended well beyond the twelfth century.⁸¹ Prior to that time his known logical treatises included only the *Categories* and *On Interpretation*, or *Perihermeneias*, the so-called *Logica Vetusta* that deals primarily with basic terms and propositions.⁸² In contrast, the *Logica Nova* extends to the later works of the *Organon* – the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*, the *Topics* and the *Sophistical Refutations* – and thus to complex logical operations. Reintegration of the *Organon* and the rise of French courtly romance are two important features of the so-called “renaissance” of the twelfth century which together suggest a renewed philosophical and literary concern with the nature of thought and the modes of perceiving the material world. While the *Logica Nova* revolutionized scholastic argumentation, eventually paving the way to the powerful syntheses of an Aquinas, the enrichment of romance as a medium for representing cognitive processes established tendencies that persist in the works of Jean de Meun and Chaucer. It is significant that John of Salisbury, in the fourth book of the *Metalogicon* (1159), was the first to discuss at length the *Posterior Analytics* as part of the foundations of logic,⁸³ while at that same moment poets of romance were beginning to show an interest in issues similar to those addressed by commentators of the *Logica Nova*.⁸⁴

Each of our four examples features an instance of hypothesis, or abduction, in which rational inquiry goes awry in the hands of an inept practitioner, an “analyst” who arrives at a consequential yet entirely erroneous hypothesis. In the examples from Chrétien and Béroul, the tryst is perceived as a locus in need of a clarification, which is amplified as a syllogistic *argumentum*. This recalls the final treatise of the *Organon*, the *Sophistici Elenchi*, or *Sophistical Refutations*, which received numerous commentaries during the twelfth century, beginning around 1130.⁸⁵ Other examples from courtly narratives share its central concern with types of specious reasoning – “sophistical refutations, that

is, arguments which appear to be refutations but are really fallacies and not refutations" (164a 20) – based on figures analyzed in the *Analytics* and the *Topics*. Aristotle discusses thirteen "methods of producing a false illusion" in one's argument (165b 24f). His discussion of the "refutation connected with the consequent" (167b 5f) is particularly evocative of Meleagant's treatment of the "ansaignes," the signs he purports to interpret: "In rhetorical arguments," says Aristotle, "proofs from signs are founded on consequences, for, when men wish to prove that a man is an adulterer, they seize upon the consequence of that character, namely, that the man dresses himself elaborately or is seen wandering abroad at night – facts that are true of many people, while the accusation is not true" (167b 9f).

Our "analysts" likewise err in assuming that their assumptions based on perceptible signs are incontrovertible demonstrations and not merely what Aristotle calls "arguing with a view to plausibility, *i.e.*, only dialectically" (81b 19). While "demonstration proceeds from universals" (81b 1), in hypothetical reasoning the middle term, the "rule" that validates the hypothesis, may stem from premises based on opinion (81b 20). Thus Meleagant, whose middle term is a misogynistic opinion, mistakes a plausible conjecture for truth and unwittingly tenders a rhetorical hypothesis as an authentic demonstration.⁸⁶ This scene is indicative of an interest in the potential for interpretive infelicities precisely when they are part of a formal presentation; it is suggestive of a ludic dramatization inspired by *logica probabilis* and the figures disfigured in sophistical argumentation. There is also an ironic kind of reflexivity between Meleagant and his maker, the poet, for both his hypothetical argument and the poet's fiction are rhetorically amplified pseudo-ontologies with no valid claim to universal truths.⁸⁷ While showing how Meleagant rhetorically subverts dialectic by confounding the probable with the universal, Chrétien also dramatizes a basic premise of novelistic fiction: to blur the distinction between truth and verisimilitude by generating possible worlds that imitate real laws and mechanisms.

We see similar tendencies in the other three examples. In each the specular encounter in some way involves erroneous apprehension of what is merely plausible as indeed true. Similar instances can be found elsewhere in Old French romance. They show how inferences can be

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vitiating by ignorance or error, so that judgment is predicated on verisimilitude mistakenly perceived as truth. Misapprehensions of this sort are featured in a wide range of episodes of romance, some involving humor or irony, others tending towards symbolism or enigma. In the instances of specular encounter that reflect these tendencies, the mechanisms of cognition, and notably depictions of specious reasoning, are reflexive inventions that take precedence over straightforward representation of action. In so doing, they destabilize the schema's veridictory function while opening the fiction onto the richly productive interplay of competing possible worlds.

The specular encounter in fictions of lineage

Once upon a time in Picardy a noble couple, hopeful that God would grant them a child, undertook a pilgrimage to Compostella. En route, marauders bound the husband and raped the wife, who then tried to kill her spouse. For this her father had her set adrift in a sealed barrel, but rescuers took her to the Sultan of Almeria, with whom she settled and had children. And the great grandson of this Picard noblewoman was none other than the mighty Saladin.

Once upon a time in Libya there were two young and beautiful Jewesses. Their father had died in the prime of his manhood, leaving them alone and vulnerable in a strange land. One day a sheik arrived in their village and kidnapped the elder of the two. He carried her off to an oasis near the Tunisian border, where she bore him many children. And the eldest son of this Jewish captive is none other than Colonel Mohamar Khadafi.

The second anecdote, of recent vintage, was cited in *Le Monde* as an apocryphal tale circulating in Jerusalem.¹ The first summarizes a thirteenth-century prose tale about a northern French noblewoman, *La Fille du comte de Pontieu*.² Despite the gap of seven centuries, their similarities are striking: each makes a scandalous revelation concerning a notorious historical figure. One makes Saladin, who in recapturing Jerusalem in 1187 undid a major achievement of the first Crusade, the descendant of a French noblewoman; in the other the Libyan leader Khadafi, who when the item appeared was making the headlines as a villain, is the son of a Jewish mother. Despite pretensions to historical veracity, both are etiological legends that transform politically controversial figures into the offspring of their worst enemies. Both, moreover, illustrate a type of fiction that makes a disclosure concerning kinship, one that is often implausible, always astonishing, and alters the story's

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significance by its unanticipated cultural or political implications. In this chapter we take up one particular subtype of these stories that suddenly become family fictions, one often found in medieval French narratives. It consists of stories in which the turn toward family fiction occurs by means of a specular encounter that confronts the protagonist with a highly significant account of his or her origins, lineage, or family. Initially we shall focus on two remarkable examples that bring to light an illustrious female forbear, and they in turn will lead us to entertain the larger implications of this usage of the schema in a wide variety of works.

THE SPECULAR ENCOUNTER IN *LA FILLE DU COMTE
DE PONTIEU*

Let us return to the aforementioned story, though not to that part concerning Saladin, but rather to the most illustrious of his alleged forbears, Ponthieu's daughter. In Almeria she has converted to Islam, married the sultan, and borne him a son and a daughter; more than two years after her arrival, she discovers that three of the sultan's captives, washed ashore in a storm, are none other than her first husband Thibaut, her father the Count, and her brother. As they are about to be executed, she queries each in turn as to who he is and where he is from while concealing her own identity, and with the sultan's permission places them in her entourage.

When the sultan becomes embroiled in strife with a neighboring sultanate, she uses the conflict as a pretext to stage a specular encounter, compelling her father to relate back to her her own story as he perceives it: "'Dame,' fait li quens, 'jou cuit qu'ele soit morte.' – 'Coument morut ele?' fait la dame. – 'Dame,' fait li quens, 'par une oquoison qu'ele deservi.' – 'Kele fu l'oquoisons?' fait la dame" (431–35) [My lady, said the count, I believe she is dead. How did she die? asked the lady. My lady, said the count, in a manner she deserved. What manner? asked the lady]. She listens as he recapitulates at length the first part of the story we now reread abridged, in indirect discourse, of her marriage to Thibaut; of their inability to conceive; of the knight's consequent vow to make a pilgrimage to Compostella and her insistence on accompanying him.

He dwells on the couple's fateful ordeal in the forest: after Thibaut

had killed three of the eight brigands who attacked them, the other five had bound him and thrown him into a thorn bush, then raped her in turns before fleeing. In poignant detail, the count relates the painful aftermath of the trauma:

Li boins chevaliers le vit et li pria molt doucement: “Dame, or me desloïés, si nous en irons.” Ele vit une espee qui a un des larrons estoit keue, si le prist et vint vers lui en sanllant de molt grant ire, et li dist: “Je vous deslierai.” Ele tint l’espee nue et l’en cuida ferir parmi le cors. Par la volenté de Dieu et par le viguer du boin chevalier, il se tourna chou desous deseure. Ele ataint les loiens, si les trencha et li blecha les bras. Les mainz li lasquierent, et il rompi les loiens de ses piés, et sali sus, si bleciés com il estoit, et dist li: “Dame, se Dieu plaist, vous ne m’ocirés huimais!” Et ele li dist: “Ce poise moi.” (449–62)

[The good knight saw her and asked her very gently: My lady, untie me now, and we’ll be on our way. She spotted a sword one of the thieves had dropped, seized it, and moved toward him angrily, saying: I’ll untie you! She brandished the naked sword so as to strike his body. With God’s will and the knight’s strength, he turned himself over so that she struck the ties and cut them, wounding his arms. His hands freed, he broke the bindings on his feet, and, though wounded, leaped up and said: If it please God, my lady, you’ll not kill me today! And she replied: I regret that!]

At this point the lady interrupts her father, not to reveal her identity, but to provide a gloss, claiming an insight into the unfortunate woman’s motivation: “‘A!’ fait la dame, bien sai que voir avés dit, et bien sai por quoi ele le vaut ocirre. – Dame, por quoi?’ – ‘Por le grant honte qu’il avoit veu que ele avoit soufferte et rechut devant lui’ (462–66) [Ah!, said the lady, I know that you’ve told the truth, and I know why she wanted to kill him. Why, my lady? On account of the terrible shame she had suffered in front of him]. Thibaut then intervenes, and the dialogue turns into a family encounter: “Et quant mesires Tiebaus l’oï, si commencha a plorer molt tenrement et dist: ‘Elas! ques coupes i avoit ele? Dame,’ fait il, ‘si me voelle Diex delivrer de la prison u je sui, ja por ce pieur sanllant ne l’en eusse fait.’ – ‘Sire,’ fait ele, ‘che ne cuidoit ele mie adont’” (466–71) [And when Sir Thibaut heard this, he began to weep tenderly and said Alas! How was she at fault? Lady, he said, may God free me from the prison I’m in, I would never have treated her ill because of that. Sire, she said, she didn’t think that at the time].

This rehearsal of her own story shows that Thibaut finds her neither shamed nor blameworthy, and that her three Picard kinsmen would be overjoyed to know that she lives, so the lady reveals her identity (491–93), but with a stern countenance, so as to enlist their help in the sultan's war. The Christian husband ably defends his Saracen counterpart, and his victory assumes the ironic overtones of a second bride-winning test. And once the sultan's realm is secure, the lady departs with her kinsmen and, via Rome, they return to Picardy, where she resumes her Christian marriage to Thibaut.

The specular encounter makes way for restoration of that marriage by facilitating mutual understanding. Why she had tried to murder her husband after being raped had been a mystery. In her father's vivid rehearsal of the ordeal she perceives it with enough detachment to understand, at last, her desire at that moment to eliminate the sole witness of her shame. She also learns that Thibaut holds her innocent under those circumstances. Repetition of the trauma in the form of a specular encounter enables her to break her long silence and at last interpret her own story.³ Her encounter with her own story also breaks the functional stalemate into which the house of Ponthieu had fallen after her banishment: Thibaut had been unable to think of remarriage; her brother had resisted becoming a knight; and the count's abuse of his daughter had weighed heavily upon him as a sin (287–92). Familial reinterpretation of her specular story is the fulcrum of familial reconciliation.

La Fille illustrates the archaic paradigm of the family dispersed by catastrophe, and its members subjected to individual tribulations prior to their reunion. This kind of plot has a long pedigree whose branches include Greek romances of Antiquity and their Latin counterparts, as well as various traditions in folklore.⁴ As in *Guillaume d'Angleterre* and the *Vie de Saint Eustace*, in *La Fille* the family reunion is effected by a dramatic specular encounter, as in the story-type identified, after Arne-Thompson, as AT 938, concerning the family reunited after a period of tribulations.⁵ In both, the specular encounter marks two critical junctures: the opening episode, in which a divine injunction compels the protagonist to abandon his milieu and embark on a new way of life, and the denouement that reunites the family.

Both *Guillaume d'Angleterre* and the *Vie de Saint Eustace* open with a

specular prolepsis that guarantees the protagonist divine compensation for steadfast faith, obedience, and self-abnegation. In *Eustace*, the stag voices Christ's mandate of the hero's conversion, after which he suffers, Job-like, material privations and the dispersal of his family, as we saw in the Introduction. In *Guillaume d'Angleterre*, the eponymous monarch is twice awakened by a voice ordering him, in God's name, to depart "en essil."⁶ In a lengthy specular counsel (133–65), the king's chaplain tells him that if a third injunction occurs, he must forsake his worldly possessions and depart, knowing that in time God will reward him a hundredfold. In each work, a specular encounter in the penultimate episode marks the conventional moment of familial recognition and reunion. Eustace eventually returns to his Roman military duties; unbeknownst to him his grown sons are serving under his command. The three meet at an inn run by none other than Eustace's wife. After an exchange of autobiographies, familial recognition ensues in cascades, though their refusal to abjure their faith entails martyrdom, valorized as a spiritual triumph.⁷ In the romance, Guillaume and Gratiennne, his queen, meet after years of separation: she initially recognizes his hunting horn, then his kingly passion for hunting when, daydreaming of a stag hunt, he hails his hounds and is ridiculed by all but Gratiennne. She organizes a hunt, during which the couple exchange autobiographies; then Guillaume, chasing the stag into an adjacent realm, discovers their sons. In his anaphoric exclamation – "Buer venimes le cerf cacier, / Buer fut trovés, buer fu meüs, / Buer fu atains et retenus, / Buer fu atains, buer fu ocis" (3032–35) [Luckily we came to hunt the stag; luckily we found it; luckily it sprang; luckily we caught and held it; luckily it was hit, luckily slain] – we see that the phases of the hunt unfold in rhythm with this progressive familial *anagnoris*.⁸

In both *Eustace* and *Guillaume d'Angleterre* familial recognition rounds out a relatively straightforward tale of exemplary virtue and the operations of providence.⁹ In *La Fille du comte de Pontieu*, on the other hand, it is not as apparent what sort of fiction the familial specular encounter serves so efficiently as the *clef de voûte*. Although it has been called the first *nouvelle* in French, it defies more specific classification. It has the look of a generic hybrid;¹⁰ at times it is reminiscent of chronicle,¹¹ and one also notes sporadic features of folktale, adventure romance, and epic. But this diversity of *matières* is effectively unified by

genealogy. The daughter's revelation to her kinsmen in the dramatic climax of the specular encounter – “Sire, or poés vous dont dire ke vous estes mon pere, et que je sui vostre fille, et vous estes mes barons, et vous estes mes freres” (491–93) [Sire, now I can say that you are my father, that I am your daughter; and you are my husband, and you my brother] – not only reunites her immediate family but also sets the stage for the consolidation, through her offspring following her remarriage to Thibaut, of the Ponthieu line. And genealogy constructs the kinship network that organizes the entire narrative, from the first mention of the Count of Ponthieu in the opening sentence, to Saladin who at the very end of the story is identified as a descendant of the Count's daughter, via her own daughter who had remained in Almeria.

According to historians, genealogy had emerged as a distinct genre by the twelfth century.¹² It had ample precedent, for genealogies had for centuries played important accessory roles in consolidating power and prestige. Those of Irish chieftains and Frankish dynasties appear in the seventh century;¹³ the higher aristocracy began to make use of genealogical documents in the tenth century; and during the mid-eleventh they appeared within the lesser aristocracy as well.¹⁴ Yet genealogy was not a discrete genre, one of its most salient properties being its adaptability to serve the ends of other generic types, literary as well as historical. Indeed, the casual supplementation of genealogy with fiction was not uncommon. Lineal memory could easily falter after going back only two or three generations (Duby, “Structures,” p. 270). Even factually accurate genealogies could shade almost imperceptibly into fiction; when exhausted, factuality was sometimes supplemented from folklore, legend, or myth. From the eleventh century through the later Middle Ages a fictitious female ascendant, ancestor, or founder, could be an important component of some genealogies and genealogically informed texts.¹⁵ There were instances where noble ancestry was traced back through such a female to Carolingian stock, as did the counts of Flanders themselves. In a tenth-century genealogy Arnoul of Flanders says that his grandfather, Count Baldwin Iron-Arm, married one Judith, daughter of King Charles the Bald, thus injecting the noble Flemish vein with royal Carolingian blood.¹⁶ Of this major schema, Gabrielle Spiegel notes that “the characteristic genealogical myth of eleventh and twelfth century families involves the rape or seduction of a

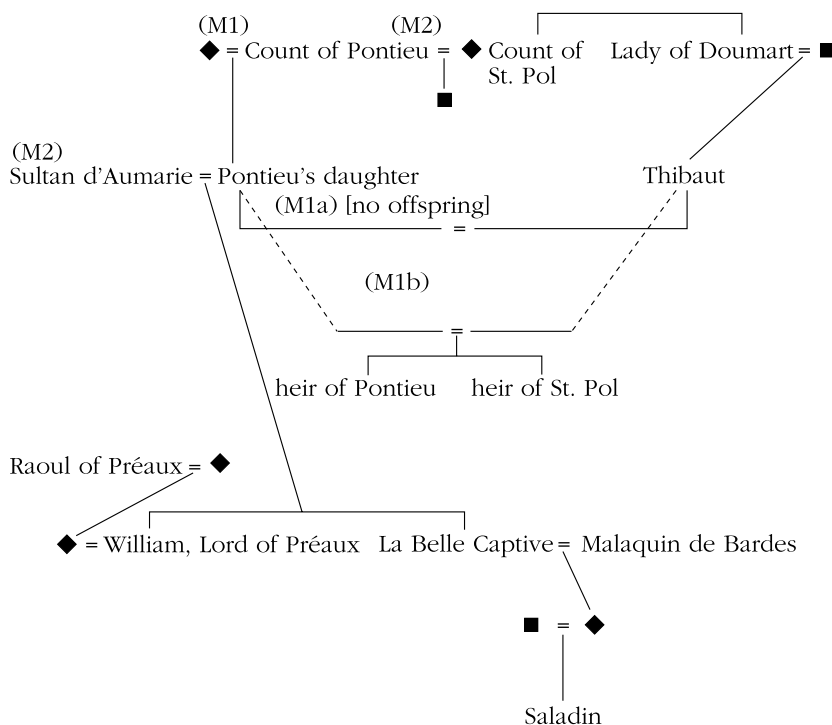
daughter of the Count of Flanders, who in marrying the social upstart that abducts her establishes the social prestige of the family, thereafter established along agnatic lines.”¹⁷

La Fille du comte de Pontieu illustrates this influential schema that found expression in historical documents and literary texts alike. Inasmuch as it traces a given lineage back to an extraordinary female who entered the line through an alliance, this type of invention could be called the schema of the medieval “mega-mother.” Normally her “otherness” with respect to the line she marries into is both geographical and ideological; sometimes she comes from a supernatural or divine otherworld. Typically she marries into a system where patrimonial succession through male heirs is the norm: sovereignty or suzerainty and the material wealth accompanying it are transmitted agnatically and by primogeniture, from father to eldest son. In such a patriarchal system one might expect this female “outsider” to enjoy a marginal status at best. Yet her lineage is always in some way superior to that of her spouse, whether in terms of power, prestige, or moral and spiritual qualities, so that inevitably her maternity enhances his line.¹⁸

Such genealogies typically credit this female ancestor with a major upturn in the line’s fortunes, and even make her the sponsor, wittingly or no, of its halcyon days. For example in the *Historia comitum Ghisnensium* (1194), Lambert of Ardres,¹⁹ having traced the counts of Guines, in Flanders, back through eight generations and lacking facts about the line’s founding, resorts to heroic fiction (Duby, “Structures,” pp. 78–82). In an epic scenario, he invents a Scandinavian adventurer, Sifridus, who allegedly wrested what would become the county of Guines from the Count of Flanders in 928, then secretly impregnated the latter’s daughter. Lambert says the count subsequently adopted and knighted this bastard, who later founded the house of Guines (Duby, “Remarques,” pp. 295–97). The ancestral past becomes an epic merger of the mother’s aristocratic line with the father’s vigorous Nordic temperament. More than two centuries before we encounter the Count of Ponthieu’s daughter, we find this count’s daughter whose union with a culturally exotic figure allegedly produced a luminary on the stage of history.

Figure 1 shows the full complex of lineal relations. The count’s daughter is the vital biological genetrix of three noble Picard houses as

The specular encounter in fictions of lineage



M – marriage = – marriage ♦ – female ■ – male

Figure 1 *La Fille du comte de Pontieu* genealogical table

well as a mediatrix of the Islamic world and Christianity.²⁰ M1a and M1b designate, respectively, her marriage and later remarriage to Thibaut of Domart, M2 her marriage to the Sultan of Almeria.²¹ Her three sons acquire noble titles: the two by Thibaut inherit Ponthieu and St. Pol, while William (Guillaume), her son by the sultan, becomes Lord of Préaux. While they represent the potential for constituting a powerful Picard dynasty, her daughter by the sultan will be the maternal grandmother of Saladin.

We see from this diagram that the schema whereby an agnatic line is enhanced by a female ascendant recurs several times. Like the daughter of a Flemish count, Ponthieu's daughter brings the prestige of his house into the sultan's line, while her daughter, La Belle Captive, bears the mother of Saladin. Thibaut's mother is the Count of St. Pol's sister, and the St. Pol line passed from the Count to his maternal nephew, thence to

the latter's son. The prestige of St. Pol is further enhanced by Thibaut's marriage to Ponthieu's daughter. The beneficial female ascendants overshadow the one significant father-son filiation: Ponthieu's son dies prematurely, leaving the count's daughter as plausibly the sole heir of Ponthieu. Meanwhile William, the sultan's son, yet also the heir of Ponthieu blood via his mother, marries the daughter of Raoul of Préaux, hence a second link between the sultanate of Almeria and European nobility through a marital alliance with the daughter of a feudal lord.

In assessing the significance of these relations, we should remember that *La Fille du comte de Pontieu* was not an autonomous story, but rather a modular tale that figured in a number of multitextual schemes, while from its inception it provides an etiological basis for the legend of Saladin's "europeanization."²² In a thirteenth-century manuscript (BN fr. 25462) containing fifteen works, we find the "rédaction primitive" of *La Fille* (Brunel, p. iii), which immediately precedes a prose version of the *Ordre de chevalerie*, in which Saladin is initiated into the arts of chivalry.²³ This version of *La Fille* ends with a reference "au courtois Salehadin,"²⁴ and there is no hint that this "courtly" descendant of the house of Ponthieu in 1187 subverted the accomplishments of the earliest Crusade.²⁵ The other thirteenth-century version of *La Fille*, interpolated into the *Estoires d'Outremer et de la naissance Salehadin*, further enhances the legend of Saladin's European forbears with liberal quantities of romance.²⁶ During the fifteenth century *La Fille* was rewritten and amplified, as the second part of a cyclical triptych that begins with *Le Roman de Jean d'Avesnes*, the grandfather of our heroine, and culminates in the *Prose Saladin*.²⁷ In the latter work, a wealth of legendary material and the resources of epic and romance depict an exemplary heroic Saladin who well exceeds the constraints of historical fact.²⁸ The growth of his legend over time recalls French epic cycles that create retrograde genealogies, moving backward from the hero through generations of his ascendants.²⁹ In its cyclic contexts, *La Fille du comte de Pontieu* was repeatedly rewritten as a vast genealogical analepsis in the biography of Saladin. As a flexible component of later medieval revisionism associated with his image, these versions imply that Saladin's courtliness derived from his noble European ancestry – an explanation that might have offered a more palatable explanation for his martial success against the crusading West.

This does not explain the story's greatest enigma: why are these lineal relations set forth in such an ironic and implausible, even bizarre plot? The couple had undertaken a pilgrimage to Compostella to ask God for an heir, only to have it disrupted by the trauma detailed in the specular encounter, the brutal gang rape and the wife's homicidal rage toward her husband, followed by her confinement in a convent while Thibaut completed the pilgrimage, then to marital alienation and, finally, a solitary voyage in a sealed barrel. Eventually she does conceive, twice, but in a Saracen sultanate, then twice again with Thibaut. Why this roundabout course to fulfill the objective of the pilgrimage to Compostella?

This matter is clarified by the way in which the "perceptual grid" of genealogy is contextualized by a whole series of *pilgrimage narratives* that serve as the vehicle of the genealogical infrastructure.³⁰ Each of the three major parts of the story is significantly marked by a pilgrimage to one of the three major destinations of medieval pilgrims: Compostella; the lands of the Crusades; and Rome.³¹ At the outset, the Compostellan venture entails the marital crisis that makes possible the daughter's eventual marriage to the sultan. In the second segment, father, son, and son-in-law take the cross in the service of God: "Fisent leur *pelerinage* molt saintement en tous les lius u il seurent c'on devoit Diu servir" (305–07) [They fulfilled their *pilgrimage* in saintly fashion wherever they learned that one should serve God]. The count also serves an expiatory year as a Templar prior to the aberrant voyage that diverts the trio to Almeria. Once reunited, the Picard family return to France via Rome, a third major venue of pilgrims, where papal counsel accompanies resanctification of the original marriage.

These pilgrimages structure the story's major segments and are also indicative of a providential design. Thibaut and his wife will produce heirs, but this blessing is divinely deferred until she conceives with the sultan. God grants her a generative function, but for two distinct lines, one Christian, one Saracen, according to a design that is neither anticipated nor understood by those involved.³² We are reminded throughout the narrative that events happen "at it pleases God"; the lady's alienation from Ponthieu, no less than her return, is purported to be under divine aegis, while in Rome the pope qualifies the Christian family's reunion as a "miracle" (40). Hence the kind of irony familiar

from hagiography, as when God grants a son to the parents of Alexis, but only according to *His* mysterious *talent* and not to give them an heir.³³ Together the pilgrimages signify that the story's implausible reversals partake of a higher covert design, one that ultimately assimilates Saladin, the agent of an alien and inimical ideology, to the sphere of feudal Christendom.

Anomalous elements remain – the gang rape and the wife's desperate attempt to murder her husband. Although their gratuitous violence exceeds the basic requirements of the intrigue, they are both evoked in detail in the specular encounter. They are also consonant with the way in which our genealogical schema frequently involves some form of sexual transgression, as in Sifrid's rape of the Count of Flanders's daughter, and Baldwin Iron-Arm's adulterous seduction of the daughter of Charles the Bald. Sexual violence is perhaps attributable to the fact that the schema commonly involves an exogamous union of two parties representing potentially contradictory value-systems – a confrontation of social strata, a cross-cultural conflict, a merger of moral and supernatural beings – and the extraordinary female is typically viewed with ambivalence. Deemed desirable as a potential source of power and prestige for the line, she is also socially or culturally "other," or under some type of prohibition or conditional constraints, so that conventional matrimonial protocols are highly problematic, if not unthinkable. Abduction, seduction, rape, and other forms of transgression offer expedient alternatives for effecting the improbable union. In *La Fille du comte de Pontieu* the initial sexual trauma of rape is compounded by paternal repudiation, then by a form of maritime abduction.³⁴ Her ultimate victimization, the forced marriage to the sultan, transgressively neutralizes her Christian alterity as an ideological impediment.³⁵

By constructing two culturally diverse nuclear families through a single genetrix and coordinating them by means of a specular encounter, the story creates a remarkable specimen of medieval *imaginaire généalogique*, with its distinct propensity to alloy biology with mythology. Moreover, the scandalous is revalorized when a marriage predicated on transgression of sacrosanct Christian vows is depicted as part of a divine plan. Mythopoeic creativity partakes here of a relatively pacific mentality: it implicitly eschews the primitive epic idealization of a pure family, a pure class, or a pure race, and along with it the attendant

anxiety generated by those rare, monstrously treacherous figures instrumental in the transgression of cultural boundaries held to be inviolable.³⁶ Instead we find confident, beneficial attribution of a Christian bloodline to no less than a Saladin, and of a Saracen bloodline to the Picard descendants of Raoul de Préaux.³⁷ In *La Fille du comte de Pontieu*, then, the feudal aristocracy's oft-implemented model of genealogical enrichment through alliances with female social capital emphasizes a less violent image of what Natalie Zemon Davis has recently called "métissage culturel."³⁸ Repeatedly dramatized in this story, cultural interbreeding provides a means of ultimately rendering an otherwise pernicious collective trauma comprehensible in terms of a Christian view of history. *La Fille du comte de Pontieu* thus joins many other late medieval texts – *chansons de geste*, romances, pseudo-chronicles, didactic treatises, and so forth – that endorse a shift away from the exaltation in early epic of Saracen-bashing and wholesale ethnic cleansing.³⁹ In this instance, however, those stereotypes are exchanged for others that are scarcely more subtle: the requisite bicultural procreation is conveniently facilitated by an instrumentalized womb and a disposable sultan. Once again we see that genealogical ends outweigh the procreative means and that if the roots of courtly literature lie deep in the feudal imagination, the deepest are perhaps those that pertain to the vexed questions of lineage and genealogy.

SPECULAR ENCOUNTERS IN JEAN D'ARRAS'S
ROMAN DE MELUSINE

The schema of the mega-mother still thrives in a prose masterpiece completed in 1393, the monumental *Roman de Mélusine* by Jean d'Arras.⁴⁰ Here we find, though on a far grander scale, a virtual replay of Lambert of Ardres's chronicle of the counts of Guines.⁴¹ This romance repeatedly purports to be a history of the Lusignan dynasty of Poitou, whose political empire during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries included the kingdoms of Jerusalem and Cyprus.⁴² Although ample documentation was available in the late fourteenth century, and though Jean d'Arras constantly asserts the veracity of his account, the historical Lusignans are virtually eclipsed here by the astonishing fiction of the dynasty's foundation and fortunes under the

aegis of the supernatural Melusine.⁴³ After marrying Raymondin, a Poitevin nobleman, she showers him with abundant wealth, power, privilege, prestige, and offspring; she is the great civilizer, overseeing the construction of castles and towns virtually overnight, pausing occasionally to give birth. Most of her ten sons are exceedingly handsome, despite a characteristic “mother mark” suggestive of fairy origins: one son has three eyes, another only one, a gigantic tusk projects from the mouth of another, one has a lion’s paw on his cheek, and so on.⁴⁴ Such traits, however, matter not at all to the daughters of royalty and nobility who marry these youths, most of whom achieve fame and fortune abroad, ever expanding the horizons of the Lusignan dynasty.

These achievements harbor a somber underside, however, for amidst unbridled political growth, the schema of the illustrious female ancestor is disrupted by a tragedy, one that results from a reflexive doubling of the pattern. For Melusine’s mother, Presine, was also a fairy; she had made her spouse, King Elinas of Albanie, vow never to see her in childbed (“gesine,” 9), a taboo he violated when Presine bore triplets. The sisters learned of this years later, and Melusine, the eldest of the three, instigated their father’s imprisonment inside a mountain; as punishment Presine’s curse decreed that on Saturdays Melusine would metamorphose into a serpent, unless she could somehow live and die as the wife of a mortal and conceal her serpentine transformations.⁴⁵ Thus, like her mother, Melusine imposes upon her prospective spouse a pact, or *convenant* (42): he must never try to find her on Saturdays (26). If he obeys, she tells him, “vous serez ly plus puissans et ly plus honnorez qui oncques feust en vostre lignaige” (42) [you’ll be the most powerful and honored of anyone in your lineage]; otherwise, “vous et voz hoirs decherront petit a petit” (42) [you and your heirs will gradually decline].⁴⁶ This double prolepsis makes Raymondin the one who determines which prophecy, and thus which version of the story, will unfold. For many years he respects the taboo; then one Saturday, prompted by a kinsman’s calumnious gossip, he spies on Melusine in her bath and sees her blithely splashing her massive serpentine tail, whereupon the story begins its long downward spiral.

At this juncture, Jean d’Arras has already begun to alter the schema of the illustrious female benefactor of a feudal lord.⁴⁷ By modeling Melusine after her own mother, Jean lends the pattern an air of

normativity, as if it might stem back into an unfathomable past, through countless cases of noble domains abetted by fairies. We also glimpse an elusive feminine adjuvant in Melusine's fleeting allusion to the mistress of Raymondin's father, "une dame de laquelle je ne vous vueil pas parler . . . qui lui aida en son premier gouvernement a faire les forteresses et les villes et habiter le pays" (50) [a woman I don't wish to tell you about . . . who helped him during his first lordship to build fortresses and cities and populate the land]. These hints implicitly generalize the paradigm of the beneficent fairy and hint that it might have helped both lineages auspiciously converge in the marriage of Melusine and Raymondin, where it also avails magnificently until it is undone by spousal betrayal at the moment of specular encounter.

Whereas in *La Fille du comte de Pontieu* the specular encounter in the middle of the story reintegrates the couple, in the middle of Jean's romance it abruptly ends the extremely productive marriage of Melusine and Raymondin. Although she is immediately aware of his transgressive spying, she makes no immediate response. But the most volatile of their sons, Gieffroy Grant Dent, outraged that his brother Fromont has become a monk, sets the monastery of Maillezais ablaze, destroying Fromont and his brethren.⁴⁸ Outraged, Raymondin attributes Gieffroy's evil to a mother whose offspring all bear strange markings, and he accuses her before the local nobility:

Hee, tres faulse serpente, par Dieu, ne toy ne tes fais ne sont que fantosme, ne ja hoir que tu ayes porté ne vendra a bon chief en la fin. Comment raront les vies ceulx qui sont ars en grief misere, ne ton filz qui s'estoit renduz au crucefix? Il n'avoit yssu de toy plus de bien que Fromont. Or est destruit par l'art demoniacle, car tous ceulx qui sont forcennéz de yre sont ou commandement des princes d'enfer; et par ce fist Gieffroy le grant et horrible et hideux forfait d'ardoir son frere et les moines qui mort ne avoient point desservie. (255)

[Ha, treacherous serpent! By God, you and your deeds are but phantasms, and no heir that you bore will come to any good in the end. How will those who were burned alive ever come back to life, or will your son, who had consecrated himself to the Crucifix? Fromont was the only good offspring born to you. Now he's been destroyed by demonic guile, for those who are insane with rage are under the sway of the princes of hell; thus Gieffroy did this immense and heinous

and hideous crime of burning his brother and those monks who didn't deserve to die!]

This moment recalls the Duke of Burgundy's public excoriation of the Duchess in *La Chastelaine de Vergi*, as well as Chrétien's transitional use of the vituperative specular encounter during the pivotal crisis. This invective sparks the principal crisis in Jean's romance, one that is both marital, on account of the violated taboo, and metaphysical, since the violation prevents Melusine from escaping her monstrous state by living out her life as a mortal. Among the analogous moments in Chrétien's works, it is especially reminiscent of Meleagant, in that it favors the addressee to the detriment of the informant. For the scandal Raymondin self-righteously trumpets was discovered by his own voyeurism, which was predicated on a perjured vow, as Melusine ruefully observes (256). She meets his frantic behavior with remarkably rational poise; addressing him "molt courtoisement," she qualifies his outrage as "grant folie" (254–55), and speaks sagaciously about accepting God's mysterious ways though they escape our understanding. She suggests that divine wrath might have incited Gieffroy's "oultrage," to punish the sinful monks. Besides, she concludes, we have the wherewithal to rebuild a larger abbey, and, God willing, Gieffroy will atone for his deed. Although Raymondin assents on a rational plane – "si scet bien qu'elle lui dit voir de quanqu'elle lui avoit dit, et que c'est le meilleur selon raison" (255) [he knows very well that everything she says is true and superior according to reason] – his distraught raving is described in terms similar to those he himself uses to qualify Gieffroy's arson as demonic, and as he is about to launch his diatribe, "il fu si tresperciez et outrez de yre que raison naturelle s'en estoit fuye de lui" (255) [he was suffused with such wrath and outrage that natural reason had abandoned him]. From Chrétien's Yvain, too, "natural reason" had taken leave, but his recovery was auspicious for both couple and society, whereas here the personal and collective consequences foretold by Melusine are inevitable.

Thus the second movement of the intrigue begins as Melusine, now imprisoned in her serpentine form, soars away from the towers of Lusignan, shrieking a wild lament; soon thereafter Raymondin retires from the world, and the Lusignan dynasty begins its long decline. But

the specular encounter is repeatedly crucial elsewhere in this romance, where, as in *La Fille du comte de Pontieu*, it enlightens certain individuals concerning their lineage. This occurs once in the first part of the romance, then again in the second, and finally in the epilogue, and each time one of the supernaturally empowered feminine figures – Melusine, her mother, or her sister – makes possible or facilitates the encounter. Their assistance at these moments is cognitive rather than material, and together these disclosures enable the Lusignan males to locate themselves within a larger genealogical context, one that reflects backward into their Breton and Poitevin heritage while also projecting the future of the line through multiple generations, thus establishing the comprehensive coherence of this work as a dynastic fiction.

The first focuses on the lineage of the dynasty's paterfamilias, Raymondin. Like Perceval, Guinglain, and the Lancelot of the prose texts, Raymondin enters manhood unaware of the name and identity of his father, and Melusine supplies it: "vostre pere ot nom Hervy de Leon" (48) [Your father was Hervy de Leon]. Her telling of the father's story enables Raymondin to recover the long-lost patrilineal heritage. Hervy, a Breton nobleman, was the esteemed seneschal of the King of Brittany but then fell victim to a rival faction. His enemies convinced the king's nephew and ostensible successor that his uncle had secretly made Hervy his heir; when the irate nephew attempted to murder Hervy, the latter killed him in self-defense, then fled, abandoning his Breton domain to the mendacious schemer who had aroused the nephew's wrath. Melusine dispatches Raymondin to Brittany to retrieve his patrimony and provides oracular instructions: before the king he must accuse the usurper of treason, then defeat his son in judicial combat and seize the patrimony (48–51). The ensuing narrative vastly amplifies her prophecies (51–66). Indeed, this retro-prospective specular encounter and the contentious episode in Brittany to which it gives rise could well have sustained extensive development as an independent romance.

Her tale of Hervy's treacherous dispossession is reminiscent of the tribulations of Lancelot's father, Ban de Benoïc;⁴⁹ it also recalls how Tristan, at the court of King Mark, is victimized by jealous calumny. Yet these echoes are faint compared to Melusine's affinities with supernatural female informants in earlier *lais* and romances. As at the

midpoint of *Le Bel Inconnu*, for example, her role is to unveil the hero's identity and mission with respect to the father's name and status.⁵⁰ His genealogical awareness is also furthered by two other specular encounters. Embedded in Melusine's tale of Hervy we find a mirror-image of Raymondin's own situation in her allusion, cited above, to a female who helped his father civilize the Forez long before he married the sister of the Count of Poitiers and produced a number of offspring, including Raymondin (50). We find a third specular encounter in the prophecy Raymondin heard from his paternal uncle, the Count of Poitiers, shortly before the latter's accidental death. The Count foretells that a subject who kills his lord will become the wealthiest, most powerful and honored man in his lineage and will sire a noble lineage whose fame will endure until the end of time. Soon thereafter, Raymondin himself, in a quasi-Oedipal kind of irony, unwittingly fulfills this prophecy when he attempts to slay a boar and instead mortally wounds his uncle.⁵¹ Collectively, these encounters locate Raymondin with respect to his own past and future while also informing the Lusignan dynasty of its Breton and Poitevin ancestry on the founding father's side.

Yet another genealogically informative specular encounter concerns the matrilineal heritage of the founding mother, Melusine. It occurs near the end of the story and involves the couple's son, Gieffroy Grant Dent, who in due course inherits Lusignan. In pursuit of a giant, Gieffroy finds his way into the mountain where Melusine and her sisters had long ago imprisoned their father for perjuring his vow to Presine. There he discovers a message that Presine had destined exclusively for a long-awaited descendant:

Et lors trouva ou millieu une des plus riches tombes, d'or et de pierres precieuses, qu'il cuidast jamais avoir veue. Et par dessus avoit la figure d'un chevalier, grant a merveilles, qui avoit une riche couronne d'or ou chief, ou il ot grant foison de bonnes pierres. Et a ses piez avoit en estant une royne d'albastre, couronnee richement, et tenoit un tablel qui disoit: Cy gist mon mary, le noble roy Elinas d'Albanie, et devisoit toute la maniere comment il avoit la esté mis, et pour quelle cause; et leurs trois filles, Melusigne, Palestine, Melior, comment elles avoient esté punies pour ce qu'elles avoient la enserré leur pere; et comment le jayant avoit la esté commis pour garder le lieu jusques a tant qu'il en seroit gecté par l'oïr de l'une des filles; et comment nulz ne pourroit jamais entrer leans s'il n'estoit de leur lignage; et le devisoit tout au

The specular encounter in fictions of lineage

long, ainsi qu'il est escript cy dessus ou chapitre du roy Elinas.
(265–66)

[And then he found in the middle (of the chamber) one of the most sumptuous tombs, adorned with gold and precious stones, that he recalled ever having seen. Atop it was the figure of a knight, exceedingly tall, wearing a splendid golden crown set with many precious jewels. At the foot of the tomb was an alabaster queen, regally crowned and holding a tablet that read: Here lies my husband, the noble King Elinas of Albanie. It told the whole story of how he had been confined there, and why; and of how their three daughters, Melusine, Palestine, and Melior, had been punished for imprisoning their father there; and of how the giant had been set to guard the place until he would be expelled therefrom by an heir of one of the daughters; and how no one could enter there except one of their lineage. It gave the entire account, just as it is written above, in the chapter on King Elinas.]

Gieffroy's tombstone discovery recalls analogues from the Prose *Lancelot* discussed in Chapter Three.⁵² He eventually recognizes in Elinas and Presine his maternal grandparents, and he reveals this kinship to his illustrious brothers, thus fulfilling the schema of the mega-mother by instilling within the historical consciousness of the line an awareness of Melusine's mythic background.⁵³

In the third case, in the epilogue, a feminine agent of the *merveilleux* is once again instrumental in bringing a later generation into contact with an earlier one by means of a specular encounter. This occurs during the reign of a descendant of Melusine's third son, Guion. The line's foretold decline is now at an advanced stage, yet the memory of its halcyon days persists, thanks to an ancestral shrine where another dramatic recognition of kinship occurs. In a castle where this Lusignan monarch sojourns, an enormous mural depicts "mainte belle hystoire peinte, et les escriptz dessus qui donnent la congnoissance que c'est" (303) [many illustrated stories, with written texts above them telling what they are]; notable among these is "l'ystoire du roy Elinas d'Albanie et de Presine et de leurs trois filles, et tout du chief en chief jusqu'en la fin, comment ses filles l'enclairent en la haulte montaigne de Brumberio en Norhombellande, et comment Presine, leur mere, les pugny quant elle scot le meffait qu'elles orent fait de leur pere, et tout le fait de chief en chief" (303–04, my emphasis) [the story of King Elinas of Albanie and

Presine and their three daughters, *and everything, from the beginning right to the end*, how his daughters confined him in the high mountain of Brumberio in Northumbria, and how Presine, their mother, punished them when she found out the evil deed they did to their father, *the whole thing, from one end to the other*]. This visual analepsis traces the dynasty's ambivalent past back to the vanishing point before its inception, back to the primordial transgression that had simultaneously determined Melusine's need to marry a mortal and marked the precedent of spousal betrayal that would eventually destroy her marriage.

Having contemplated this ancestral spectacle, though unaware of its specular significance to himself, this latter-day Lusignan attempts the Custom of the Sparrow Hawk, whereby a challenger must keep vigil for three consecutive days and nights in order to win any reward of his choosing *except* the privilege to consort with the lady of the castle.⁵⁴ Although he succeeds, he will settle only for this lady's love, and even attempts to take her by force. While failing, he also earns her malediction for attempting to violate, albeit unwittingly, the most fundamental of all taboos: "Povre fol, n'es tu pas descendu de la lignie du roy Guion, qui fu filz Melusigne, ma suer, et je suis ta tante, et tu es si prez de mon lignaige, posé que je me vouldisse assentir a toy avoir, que l'eglise ne s'i vouldroit pas accorder" (305) [Wretched fool, are you not a descendant of King Guion, the son of my sister Melusine? I am your aunt, then, and we are such close kin that, even if I were to consent to have you, the church would not allow it]. Because this descendant of Presine and Melusine has attempted to rape the latter's sister, Melior, she lays a curse on the family's nine succeeding generations, culminating in its loss of the kingdom (305). Hence, at last, we learn how Melusine's prophecy of the dynasty's decline had come to pass.

Jean's story of the Lusignan dynasty is thus marked at the beginning, middle, and end by the same pattern of transgression and reversal, whereby a male breaks a taboo limiting his proximity to one of the supernatural females in the genealogy: Elinas's violation of Presine's taboo initiates the developments that lead to the dynasty's foundation; Raymondin's betrayal of Melusine triggers the central crisis at the apogee of the line's fortunes; his descendant's refusal to obey Melior's interdict initiates the ultimate phase of its decline. Through threefold

repetition of the motif of a violated taboo, this dynastic fiction recalls in its overall shape the kind of crisis textuality examined in Chrétien's romances (Chapter Two). Together, these segments disclosing kinship relations reconstruct the entire protohistory of the main intrigue; they depict the origins of the bilateral pseudo-chronicle, both feudal and *féerique*, and detail the circumstances that led to the line's extinction.

Although the schema of the beneficial female ancestor is central to *Melusine*, this late medieval work contrasts with those eleventh- and twelfth-century genealogies in which the exotic mother brought only prestige and prosperity. Jean's assimilation of the schema to a tale of tragedy is no doubt due to the circumstances of patronage. Jean, duc de Berry, one of the most prominent French patrons of the late fourteenth century, commissioned it just as Léon de Lusignan, the last of the dynasty's heirs, was dying in Paris. Jean de Berry had recently come into possession of Lusignan in the course of the Hundred Years' War, but held only an extremely tenuous claim to the territory through a distant kinship alliance with the Lusignans, and Jean's romance – which presents itself as history – was meant to shore up his bid for the Lusignan legacy.⁵⁵ The strategy becomes transparent in the epilogue, where Jean explains that Melusine always returned to Lusignan in the form of a flying serpent in order to signify her approval of a new proprietor. This indeed occurred, he emphasizes, on behalf of the Duc de Berry's claim. The myth of the beneficially maternal progenitor is thus radically modified here, in order to serve the ends of political propaganda.⁵⁶ For the work was obviously not written primarily to exalt the archaic Lusignan line, whose decadence it acknowledges. It initially places the schema of the mega-mother in service to the Lusignans, then undermines it in that capacity, and finally rehabilitates it in the epilogue, but now on behalf of the romance's patron.⁵⁷ *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*: history is injected with fiction so as better to serve the tendentious ends of history.

La Fille du comte de Pontieu and the *Roman de Mélusine* are among many narratives featuring an exceptional female's role in a genealogical design; from the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries the schema proved readily adaptable to both historiographic and literary contexts involving matrilineal influence on an essentially agnatic line. Rape and seduction are only two of the many motifs that depict the appropriation

of a feminine “other” to enhance the profile of a lineage. In Chrétien’s *Cligés*, for example, the prestige of Alexander’s Constantinople increases because of his marriage to Soredamors, Gauvain’s sister and Arthur’s maternal niece (44–2585). She “gilds” the Byzantine blazon with Arthurian luster by bearing Cligés, who recovers the patrimony from his conniving paternal uncle Alis, then effects a second beneficial alliance by marrying Fénice, the German emperor’s daughter.⁵⁸ Or the desired “other” may be supernatural, like Guinglain’s mother, who covertly sponsored his chivalric initiation,⁵⁹ thus enhancing the prestige of Arthur’s court from beyond its confines. Elsewhere, the maternal role receives divine sanction. In the cyclic Prose *Lancelot*, engenderment of Galahad requires a pure procreative partner to offset the scandal of Lancelot’s adultery, hence his unwitting union with the virgin daughter of King Pellés, the grail guardian.⁶⁰ As in the case of the Count of Flanders’s daughter, the scandal of fornication is elided on behalf of a prestigious match: Lancelot descends from King David via his mother, and from Joseph of Arimathea via his father; Pellés’s daughter is also a descendant of Joseph. In quasi-typological fashion, both Testaments and the apocrypha converge with the Arthurian legend in the womb of Galahad’s mother. Yet her maternity also signals the imminent downward spiral that ultimately sunders the Round Table and retires its monarch to Avalon. Hence one of the first late-medieval ironic adaptations of the schema of mega-motherhood, for if the advent of the son of the Fisher King’s daughter was presumably a boon to the rewriters of the Arthurian legend in the Vulgate Cycle, it was clearly to be the bane of the Round Table.

THE IDENTITARY SPECULAR ENCOUNTER

These works featuring a female progenitor are related to a much larger corpus in which identity, lineage and genealogy are also paramount and in some way emphasized by a special subtype of our schema, which we shall call the “identitary” specular encounter. This sizable group includes male as well as female ascendants who are exceptional. A relatively early example, from around the middle of the twelfth century, is the *Roman d’Enéas*, where the eponymous hero enters the underworld and meets the shade of his father Anchises, who gives him prophetic

guidance about the role that he and his descendants will play in founding a Latin empire to succeed the House of Troy.⁶¹ As in some of our later examples, this lengthy specular encounter with the father is the cognitive pivot in a transitional crisis between the two principal parts of the narrative.⁶² For this work from a formative period of medieval courtly narrative, Aeneas's catabasis in the sixth book of Virgil's *Aeneid* provided a subtext already featuring this encounter. Yet as Lee Patterson has pointed out, emphasis in this episode, and indeed throughout the romance, attenuates the classical model's concern with history while highlighting "almost obsessively" issues of lineage and personal initiative within a lineal design.⁶³ In its insistence on the future of a lineage that descends from marvelous origins, this work's strong position on genealogy was conceivably influential on the thematic emphases of specular encounters in many later romances. It illustrates the type of specular encounter where, after political strife has severed contacts between consecutive generations, lineal awareness is restored so as to further familial or dynastic designs.⁶⁴

With Chrétien's somewhat later *Conte du graal*, which was also a seminal text in terms of identitary encounters and heroic retrieval of lineal awareness, Claude Lévi-Strauss has shown the importance of "interrupted communication."⁶⁵ In the stories of Oedipus and Perceval he perceives a relation of "inverse symmetry": penetrating the enigma of the Sphinx, Oedipus resolves a question awaiting an answer; this triumph is later valorized negatively, by "accelerated" communication – his unwitting incest and the plague that ravages Thebes and hastens pernicious natural cycles.⁶⁶ In contrast, a "Percevalian Myth" features "interrupted" communication between the hero and his lineage. When the grail hero finds in the realm of his forbears a "waste land" created by catastrophic disruption of the natural cycles, he encounters the obverse of an enigma, an answer awaiting his question; by asking it he discovers his kinship with the grail family and defines his role in restoring their leader and his realm.⁶⁷ Thus, while the "Oedipal Myth" is harmful and destructive, the "Percevalian Myth" integrates the hero into his communal heritage and harmonizes nature and culture.⁶⁸

Although Lévi-Strauss's analysis is pertinent to both parts of Chrétien's poem, it oversimplifies what is at issue in the romance. Both Perceval and Gauvain find a remnant of their respective families at an

isolated domain, and when the romance breaks off it appears that Perceval's itinerary would have taken him back – as it does in the Continuations – to the Grail Castle, to ask the requisite questions and assume leadership of the family of grail custodians.⁶⁹ Meanwhile Gauvain, having saved members of three generations of his family from the enchantments at the Roche de Canguin, begins to assume lordship of the castle (7224–9188). But these developments make the notion of “communication,” whether “interrupted” or “restored,” problematic, for at neither the Grail Castle nor the Roche de Canguin does the hero “communicate” about matters of kinship, and in both cases the relation between hero and host or hostess is retrospectively qualified as deficient because marred by non-recognition. Moreover, in these episodes “restoration” of “interrupted communication” is less important than the hero's accession to political leadership – sovereignty or suzerainty as the case may be – on behalf of his lineage. That goal is jeopardized precisely by a crucial *failure* of communication, which in Perceval's case repeatedly necessitates *corrective* instruction – from his cousin, as well as from the Hideous Damsel and the hermit uncle – while in Gauvain's case Guiromelant assumes this role of revealing a previously unrecognized kinship relation and its significance.

Hence the capital importance, once again, of the specular encounter, but in these instances it fosters discovery of identity with regard to a lineal context which is indispensable to the hero's recognition of the role he must assume on behalf of his line. Here, then, the schema serves instructive, initiatory ends. In sum, the numerous instances of identity encounters discussed above or in Chapter Three together create a broad horizon of works, one that extends well beyond the context of the grail romances.

For example, we saw how the hero of *Le Bel Inconnu* learns, from a disembodied voice, his name, that of his father, and the nature of his supernatural mother. Self-recognition extends to an awareness of the lineal context. Like Perceval, Guinglain was raised in ignorance of the name of the father, and meets with amatory distractions on the road to his highest adventure, which involves restoration of a feudal waste land by ending a long-standing enchantment before assuming the realm's lordship.⁷⁰ In both stories the prerequisite is discovery of his kinship with an avuncular or paternal figure that he had previously encountered.

The identitary encounter assumes a yet greater variety of roles in the cyclic Prose *Lancelot*, as we saw in Chapter Two. Once again, the hero learns the father's identity, but he also discovers lineal relations at numerous other junctures featuring specular encounters. Like Perceval and Guinglain, Lancelot receives early nurturance from a feminine figure who, while depriving him of news of the noble father, paradoxically sets him onto the itinerary that eventually leads him to awareness of his chivalric forbears. Unlike Perceval and Guinglain, whose ignorance primarily concerns parental identity, Lancelot's genealogical discoveries span many centuries, from Joseph of Arimathea to Galahad. As with Perceval, these lineal secrets emerge incrementally: first the paternal name, then the venerable ancestry, and finally his own eccentric place in a genealogy whose luminaries precede and follow him. The recurrent identitary encounters emphasize this, setting Lancelot apart from the highest objective of his lineage and reserving it for his spiritually superlative son. As for Arthur, Merlin's revelations of the tensions between an exalted past and an indeterminate future that will weigh upon young King Arthur show how the identitary specular encounter could consolidate vast narratives whose underlying coherence is determined by genealogy.⁷¹

These Arthurian works clearly anticipate Jean d'Arras's *Melusine*, in which three identitary specular encounters respectively enlighten Raymondin, Gieffroy, and their royal descendant concerning the nature of their lineage, examined above. In the main body of the romance, the sons of Melusine create a vast international network of lordships and monarchies, but they would remain ignorant of their antecedent lineal relations were it not for the three vital specularizations emanating from the feminine otherworld. The first two – Melusine's identification of Raymondin's father, which restores the family's link with the patrilineal, feudal ancestry, and Gieffroy's subterranean discovery disclosing the matrilineal, supernatural ancestry – recall aspects of the "Percevalian" myth; together, they enable the Melusinian progeny to trace both lines of their prestigious ancestry. While these two episodes recall the dynasty's glorious, if turbulent, rise, the third, as epilogue and prolepsis, briefly foretells the ninefold phases of its decline. Ironically, however, it brings us full circle, to the kind of "accelerated communication" Lévi-Strauss identified with the "Oedipal Myth": the royal descendant of

Melusine who violates the terms of the Custom of the Sparrow Hawk is reminiscent of Oedipus, in that he unwittingly elects a forbidden sexual relation and in so doing violates the incest taboo, which initiates the line's foretold decline. Thus the identity specular encounter serves at conspicuous junctures to reconstruct the dynastic infrastructure from its origins to its ultimate demise.

The longevity of this type of encounter may stem from its long-standing appeal to medieval audiences attuned to matters of lineage involving exceptional forbears. Many of the latter are fathers, whether long-absent (*La Fille du comte de Pontieu*), previously unrecognized (*Milun*; *Le Bel Inconnu*), or dead (*Tydorel*; the *Prose Lancelot*; *Melusine*); some of the ancestors belong to biblical or supernatural stock. While most of these figures are male, exceptional females are often vital to the encounter. Founding mothers and other significant females are typically the instigators of, or informants in, identity encounters, as shown by Perceval's mother and cousin; the Pucele as *Blanches Mains*; *Ninienne*; *Ponthieu's daughter*; and *Presine*, *Melusine*, and *Melior*. The gendering of roles suggests that while political power is predominantly masculine, the preservation and transmission of knowledge concerning such power is, in this particular schema, frequently a feminine attribute.⁷² Functional contrasts based on gender tend to reflect feudal norms: regardless of whether the retrospective evocation highlights a patrilineal descent (*Prose Lancelot*), a notable matrilineal background (*Conte du graal*), or both (*Melusine*), the influential ascendant normally fosters agnatic transmission of power and qualifies the heritage of male ascendants. Yet women in tutelary roles are especially instrumental in *remembering* the past, and the fact that many of these sapient voices of memory – Perceval's mother, the Pucele, *Ninienne*, *Melusine* advising her sons prior to their departure, and so forth – make initiatory disclosures to males entering adulthood may reflect a perception of noble women as preservers and transmitters of cultural awareness during childhood and early adolescence.⁷³

In more general terms, this particular usage of the schema seems well suited to reflections on the crisis of consciousness in the feudal world which, by the end of the twelfth century, was caught up in an accelerated and disquieting state of transition. Since the pertinent observations of Erich Köhler,⁷⁴ much has been written about how the

political and economic marginalization of feudal nobility finds expression in literary and historiographic works, whether with regard to its nefarious effects or as compensatory fictions designed to consolidate aristocratic power and privilege.⁷⁵ The micro-fictional supplement provided by the specular encounter as a bearer of concise oral archives of empowerment – whether from afar, long ago, or even from the beyond – clearly sustains scrutiny along related lines of inquiry. The frequency of episodes aimed at compensating for sociocultural upheavals hints at underlying collective anxieties about the maintenance of continuity among generations and the potential evanescence of lineal memory within the most ambitious, yet in many ways also the most fragile, social sectors. Its concerns with glorification of a lineage or renewal and furtherance of its initiatives recall the tendencies, in evidence since the eleventh century, of European nobility to trace genealogies back to illustrious though fictive ancestors.⁷⁶ Such retrospective affabulation could construct a past in service to the present, by making the power, prestige, and longevity of lineage reinforce political objectives.⁷⁷

Hence a means of conditioning and ideologizing the *future* of a class that was in fact to become increasingly vulnerable. Indeed, our examples are seldom devoid of heuristic implications. For knowledge revealed about the past of a given line rarely motivates an effort merely to restore it to its former circumstances. The specular disclosure typically virtualizes a more ambitious design; there is often an implicit mandate to seek social reanimation or renewal on a higher plane. The absent father or exemplary ancestor is unveiled less as a model for emulation than to point the way toward unique future achievements. When these are attained, they are not uncommonly valorized more positively than the exploits of an exemplary ascendant.⁷⁸

In view of this meliorative emphasis, the identitary specular encounter invites consideration as a component of fictions with distinctly utopian tendencies, whereby perception of selfhood in the mirror of the past offers a means of conceptualizing an ideal futurity. Yet one also sees from many of our examples that the projection of an optimal horizon most likely served as a palliative of collective anxieties, about the integrity and continuity of noble genealogies; about their weakening and fragmentation; and about the potential obsolescence of a system in

which hereditary lordship was the mainstay of economic strength and autonomy. To the extent that the specular encounter made revelation of kinship and genealogy the catalyst of individual initiative and social regeneration, it addressed, in hypothetical, imaginary terms, some of the most important concerns of a crepuscular, increasingly marginalized feudal nobility.

FAMILY ROMANCE

Texts that feature the identitary encounter invite consideration under the rubric of "family romance." In a brief but important essay, Freud designates thereby common infantile fantasies in which an exalted imaginary family or parent affords psychic liberation from real parents whose exigencies or slights seem unwarranted or intolerable.⁷⁹ An early, asexual variant of the fantasy replaces both parents by glorified counterparts. With the advent of sexual awareness, however, the child's fantasy tends to supplant only the father, by an idealized male identified as the mother's procreative lover. While maternity is, as Freud observes, *certissima*, paternity *semper incertus est*. This potential for imaginary substitutions in the *paternal* role destabilizes the Oedipal triangle replicated in family romance. The concept has found applications in spheres other than infantile daydreams. Freud's essay initially appeared, untitled, in 1909, as part of Otto Rank's *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, and Marthe Robert later identified two variants of family romance as fundamentals of novelistic fiction.⁸⁰ The concept also brings to mind courtly fictions whose protagonists, female as well as male, discover idealized or glorified parental figures.⁸¹ Our corpus contains a number of passages suggestive of family romance, though not as infantile fantasy. The concept is especially pertinent to specular encounters that in some highly significant way consolidate lineage.

We have seen that *La Fille du comte de Pontieu* is a "family" romance in the classical, pre-Freudian sense: a work constructed on a complex network of familial relations and centrally concerned with the constitution, disruption, and reconstitution of a noble Picard family. The movement toward familial reintegration begins with a poignant specular encounter, one that culminates in the crystallization of a powerful feudal dynasty *and* the engenderment of Saladin. In the move toward a

bifurcated genealogical infrastructure, the schema facilitates a crucial substitution in the paternal role, whereby Thibaut, previously childless, re-enters the marital alliance with the count's daughter and fathers two legitimate Picard heirs. Yet this is in fact a *re*-substitution, following the earlier, contrastively productive fulfillment of the paternal role by the Sultan of Almeria. Despite the heroine's return to her first husband, the sultan's two children with her are held to be legitimate, and both acquire significant familial distinctions: the lordship of Préaux in the son's case, the grandmotherhood of Saladin in the case of the daughter.

Here, then, are elements of "family romance" in the Freudian sense: the heroine conceives, not with her Christian spouse, but rather with an exotic partner, whose paternity is by no means discredited. The qualities of this father from a non-Christian, non-Western realm are for the most part sympathetic. Almeria is a welcoming haven for the count's repudiated, beleaguered daughter; following her conversion, the sultan weds her without hesitation and treats her with kindness and indulgence; at her behest he is clement toward his Christian captives, who obligingly help him protect his realm. In short, this sultanate, certainly no alien land of warlike Saracens, has a vaguely "utopian" quality about it. It is as if the story had conveniently "fantasized" a realm to meet the heroine's most pressing needs: for a refuge, a spouse, motherhood, and offspring. Interrupting a more conventional feudal marriage, the story reinvests the paternal role with a figure of alterity, solemnizing the heroine's union with the sultan in a quasi-mythic pseudo-hierogamy as the ancestral matrix of Saladin, "le boin roi." Yet as a medieval variant of Freudian "family romance," *La Fille* is less an infantile daydream than it is a *collective* feudal fantasy, by means of which a noble European public might palliate the historical trauma of its singular defeat by Saladin in 1187. While neutralizing the instigator's inimical alterity, the fantasy assimilates him genealogically to a context of feudal Christianity by means of a providential design that also accrues to the greater glory of Picard nobility. Indeed, though the fantasy confronts Saladin with an exalted ancestral image, the fact that the latter is a northern French noblewoman reserves the most gratifying aspect of the story for an aristocratic public.

Comparable ends are similarly served in Jean d'Arras's *Roman de Mélusine*. The extended specular encounter in which Mélusine recounts

the story of Raymondin's Breton patrimony is indeed a family romance, in both the classical and the Freudian senses. In the classical sense, the long account of how Hervy de Leon, the apple of the King of Brittany's eye and a consummate exemplar of chivalric virtues, was treacherously undone by the king's jealous nephew would have been a worthy candidate for full-scale treatment in an independent romance, and with respect to Jean's work it could easily have been pressed into service as the basis for an epic account of the hero's father in a "Raymondin Cycle." By the same token, Gieffroy Grand Dent's specular discovery of a tomb and its accompanying gloss eventually enables both him and his siblings to locate themselves within the matrilineally transmitted heritage of King Elinas, a heritage also revealed in the epilogue to the knight who visits Melior. In the Freudian sense of "family," meanwhile, these encounters are wish-fulfilling epiphanies: Raymondin discovers not only an exalted father but also, thanks to Mélusine's prophetic specifications, the precise means by which he successfully recovers the previously unsuspected patrimony. Whereas Gieffroy's subterranean encounter confronts him with the august icons of his supernatural mother's royal father and fairy mother, Melior's visitor who discovers murals depicting scenes from Presinian family romance soon learns how ambivalent, indeed perilous, descent from such fairy origins can be. His ill-omened encounter with Melior is wish-fulfilling only for Jean de Berry, for it is Jean who, as the work's patron, commissions a pseudo-historical fiction to embody his fantasy of ultimately supplanting a Lusignan while placing *himself* in the exalted patrimonial role – a wish fulfilled in the work's epilogue.

La Fille and *Melusine* are among a wider variety of narratives in which specular encounters give accounts of exceptional or supernatural engenderment suggestive of family romance. When the extraordinary female or male is conjoined with a beneficiary of the opposite sex, contrastive attributes are combined, such as a noble patronym and matrilineal wealth or supernatural abundance, for better or for worse. Or for a bit of both, as in *Le Bel Inconnu*, where Guinglain's discovery that his parents are the illustrious Gauvain and a nurturant fairy mother sows the seeds of his later heroic ambivalence. And while Yonec's mother's tale of her love affair with the hawk-knight enables him to avenge the latter's murder and occupy the paternal throne, the tale told

by Tydorel's mother inspires his summary disappearance into the depths of the patrimonial lake. In these examples the informant's role is variously invested, though cases where one parent tells an offspring about the other parent are quite common. Perceval's mother and Lancelot's mother-surrogate Ninienne figure prominently among maternal informants; in the anonymous *lai* of *Doon* it is the father who informs his son of his exceptional lineage, whereas in Marie's *Milun* the mother's letter eventually enables her son to find the distinguished knight who fathered him. In the latter part of the *Conte du graal*, on the other hand, Guiromelant, who identifies Gauvain's kinship with the queens at the Roche de Canguin, is the latter's chivalric double as well as his adversary.

Some of these cases recall the so-called "identity theme" in folklore, where the protagonist is unaware of his or her true identity, parents, and lineage and must discover them.⁸² In *Tydorel* and *Yonec* the specular story refers the son back to the anterior order of the absent father, while in the Prose *Lancelot* its recurrence names the father as well as other patrilineal ascendants; in *Milun* and *Le Bel Inconnu* it enables the son to make his way back to the previously unknown father. Inasmuch as a major concern in many of these stories is with individuation through awareness of origins and access to the profile of an exceptional ascendant, these are fictions of empowerment.

They may also serve to facilitate maturation. For example, Perceval, Guinglain, Lancelot, and the sons of Melusine are initially under the tutelage of a maternal figure who offers nurturance during a long formative period marked by isolation, stasis, and the inaccessibility of the father. The various feminine figures all show a degree of ambivalence toward the hero; they furnish, normally in the form of a *chastoiement*, specular knowledge requisite for individuation, but only after having concealed it from the youth. For these protagonists, acquisition of specular self-knowledge moves them away from the maternal universe and toward the paternal sphere and its functions.

Hence a profoundly *integrative* type of specular encounter, one that in a variety of discursive veneers dramatizes the same underlying representation, of the self mirrored within the family, but primarily as the latter is enhanced by some remarkable being, as in family romance. Sometimes inauthentic paternal figures are supplanted by true fathers,

as in *Yonec*, *Tydorel*, and the Prose *Merlin*, where Arthur learns that his father was Uther, not Kay's father. Significantly, the specular disclosure almost always unveils an *authentic* progenitor, as if in affirmation of the fantasy fundamental to family romance. Instead of offering a simple, straightforward view of familial relations, these medieval "family romances" tend to inject time, space, and varying degrees of alterity into familial relations, defamiliarizing them while also increasing the fascination they awaken within the perceiver.

While the specular story provides the addressee with new information or discloses a modified situation, it may also be considered, in view of its kinship with family romance, in terms of a *projection* of subjective desire for glorious parentage.⁸³ In this light, the addressee's projective identification, via the specular account, with a remarkable paternal figure is suggestive of the psychic transition, identified by Lacan, from the "Imaginary" to the "Symbolic" Order. In this process, the ego is constituted as subject when relations within the "Imaginary" Order yield to constraints imposed by the "Symbolic" Order in obedience to what Lacan calls the "Law of the Name-of-the-Father."⁸⁴ The notion of father as agent of the law pertains to a symbolic function signified initially by the father's prohibition of incest in the Oedipal triad,⁸⁵ an interdiction that enables the subject to transcend the primordial mother-infant dyad constitutive of the Imaginary Order. Through mastery of language, the ego relinquishes full submission to that originary order and accedes to a dynamic subjectivity whose desire is bound to the father's law – the Symbolic Order, or Name-of-the-Father.⁸⁶ Our examples of identitary specular encounter can be viewed as *metaphorical replications* of a key aspect of that process: the language of the reflexive disclosure pertaining to an exalted forbear motivates the narratee's subjective transition from the Imaginary to the Symbolic sphere.⁸⁷ The process is particularly apparent in the protagonist's relinquishment of relations with the mother or with a maternal surrogate, a relationship in some cases situated in a remote, secluded, protective realm, such as the Waste Forest, or the magical world of the Pucele and Guinglain's mother, or the artificial security created by the countless narratives solicited by Tydorel's mother so as to prevent his discovery of the story of his origins. The dominance of the idealizing, nurturant and sponsorial Imaginary Order is eventually supplanted by

the Symbolic Order, whose implicit or explicit mandates inform the specular story and locate the subject within a lineage that will subsequently confer a functional identity and provide an ultimate sanction.

Yet this type of courtly “mirror story” is by no means equivalent to what Lacan identifies as the “Mirror Stage” of the infantile ego at its inception.⁸⁸ As *Le Bel Inconnu* in particular shows, precisely the opposite of this archaic phase obtains: the story of one’s authentic lineage proffers no illusory self-image of omnipotence. Instead, it provides recognition of the self’s relation to paternal and maternal ascendants as well as its discreteness therefrom, hence a fundamental sense of *lack* constitutive of subjective desire. At the same time, however, the specular story’s disclosure of a previously covert genealogy that is in some way extraordinary enriches the account with considerable imaginary density. While being assimilated into the Symbolic Order, the subject nevertheless remains conversant with archaic configurations emanating from within the Imaginary, hence a kind of “secondary specularity” that merely echoes the primitive Mirror Stage.⁸⁹

Medieval narratives that blend the identitary specular encounter with family romance are further illustrations of that fertile genealogical imagination so often apparent in feudal culture. The use of specularity to create feudal family romance suggests a capacity for projection on the part of a sometimes fledgling and often highly ambitious nobility which made up the courtly public of these stories. For the specular story that conditions its own reception by locating the listener or reader *within* the fantasy, at the vortex of subjective desire, could have allowed a courtly public collectively vicarious access to an idealized Imaginary Order. In Freud’s characterization, family romance provides a mechanism for psychic *liberation* from kinship ties perceived as unduly restrictive. Likewise, feudal family romance might have offered an imaginary escape from captivity in a real, historical order whose stresses admitted of no such compensatory evasions.⁹⁰

The potential offered by this type of encounter for projective identification on the part of a courtly listener or reader was at best only intermittent, however, as we saw in Chapter Two, in the contrast between *Tydorel* and *Yonec*. While *Yonec* does exact the prescribed sanction upon the treacherous father and ascends the idealized father’s

throne, Tydorel in fact abandons the throne of his terrestrial father and vanishes into the supernatural father's watery realm. The inverted specularity created by these two tales is telling, for as *Yonec* culminates within a feudal framework because the father's law had inscribed his son into its symbolic context, *Tydorel* turns into a nightmare of regression.⁹¹ While for *Yonec* the paternal signifier subjects the narratee to the institution of his law, for *Tydorel* it merely signifies a void or an abyss.⁹² The way in which the process of individuation, optimally exemplified in *Yonec*, is aborted in *Tydorel* shows that even a pseudo-utopian format like feudal family romance could suddenly disclose its own dark side: when the mirror fails to portray the narratee within the symbolic constellation it otherwise reflects, family romance makes a quarter turn toward the kind of terrible alterity from which Tydorel never returns. Here, specularity nourishes no projective identification, no feudal fantasy of abundance, no fulfillment of illustrious lineal designs. Instead, it allows the narrative to approach, if only momentarily, the edge of the abyss, to hint at the unsoundable depths of a feudal unconscious.

“IN YOU, MORE THAN YOU”

Inasmuch as they demonstrate quite vividly the remarkable flexibility with which the specular encounter may accommodate, on the part of medieval writers, markedly contrastive interpretive designs predicated on conventional types of *matière*, evocation of these two cases seems especially appropriate to round out our survey of the specular encounter in a large corpus of medieval narratives. Despite the richly diverse sampling of illustrative examples our inquiry has yielded, however, it is also apparent that they all share fundamental properties, that regardless of whether the example of a Eustace, or a Guigemar, or a Chastelaine de Vergi, or any of the other cases we have scrutinized, is at issue, they all incorporate in common a number of basic features.

Salient among these are the traits that together comprise a kind of normative “psychic economy” within the intersubjective relation lying at the very heart of the schema. We have seen that the specular relation is always to some degree alloyed by perceptual, affective and temporal components brought or injected into it, often unawares, by one or both

of the parties, thus invariably increasing not only its complexity but especially the scope of its potential significance. Rather than being a replicative event, then, the encounter is a dynamic, transformational phenomenon whose primary value is heuristic; our examples show various ways in which the discourse of the Other reconstitutes the subject as a virtuality.⁹³ Moreover, this virtualization owes its existence to the engenderment within the subject of a sense of *lack*, which the encounter has suddenly disclosed or implied.⁹⁴ Hence the encounter typically hosts a relation between the subject and the informant that is characterized by *inverse reciprocity*, whereby to the subject's lack corresponds the informant's explicit or implicit provision of a means of its liquidation.

Our examples show how this basic dynamic may vary in context. For example, some of Chrétien's informants, as well as the speaking beasts in *Eustace* and *Guigemar*, illustrate the catalytic power of an explicit disclosure of lack by a critical informant. Marie de France explores various cases where the encounter disclosing a lack nonetheless culminates in a symmetrical type of reciprocity involving mutually intersubjective lacks and their liquidations, while nonetheless demonstrating the impossibility of any sort of absolute intersubjective reciprocity. Meanwhile, our examples from the *Folie Tristan* and *La Chastelaine de Vergi* emphasize the potential complications of the subject-informant relation resulting from erroneous construals fed by affective responses projected into the encounter by the subject.

The psychic normativity of the specular encounter could perhaps be summed up in the phrase by which Lacan evokes the complexities of the transference in psychoanalysis: "In you, more than you."⁹⁵ For, as we have seen time and again, the specular intersubjective relation between the subject and the instance of the informant-Other is by no means the uncomplicated product of a synchronic merger of two domains of subjective consciousness. On the contrary: though the mirror reflects the beholder's own image, the latter had previously not been perceivable to that beholder within the broader field now suddenly in evidence, offering both a new environmental panorama and fresh stimuli to activate the perceiver's desiring imagination. Eluard suggestively captures this effect: "Toi te tournant vers moi tu ne saurais trouver / Au mur de mon regard que ton ombre rêvée."⁹⁶

Fictions of identity in medieval France

It now remains for us to explore, in an Afterword, some of the larger implications, cultural as well as poetic, of the frequency and varied usage of the specular encounter, both in the works we have already examined and with reference to others that might help to shed further light on its specifically medieval profile.

The specular encounter in perspective

Our study of specular encounters has shown that in a considerable variety of narratives, featured individuals are placed before a mirror that reflects unsettling circumstances and aspects of selfhood. Although we have found the schema quite adaptable to multiple objectives, it in fact performs only a limited array of functions in our corpus. In essence, we have considered it from two complementary perspectives: as a schematic infrastructure, and in terms of the latter's varied manifestations within a few basic functional spheres.¹ In all of the *lais* of Marie de France it is accessory to establishment of intersubjective *reciprocity*; in Chrétien's romances and *Le Bel Inconnu*, it effects a midcourse reorientation, while in the Prose *Lancelot* and contemporaneous Arthurian narratives it serves a variety of ends at many crucial junctures. On the other hand, following a tryst it hosts a retrospective *analysis* that is in some way specious, while also complicating the informant-addressee relation. And in a wide range of works, including many romances and brief narratives in verse and prose, it is the locus *par excellence* of disclosures concerning lineage and identity, as well as the fulcrum of what we have characterized as medieval "family romance."

In the preceding chapters we have addressed the schema over a lengthy, remarkably fertile period that saw the phenomenal proliferation of many vernacular narrative types. To round out the inquiry, a few more general observations are in order. These pertain to the schema's communicative "core" comprising the fundamental informant-addressee relation and the ways in which it interrelates two essential functions, the informant's *revelation* of the specular message and the addressee's *recognition* of the latter.

REVELATIONS

In general, the specular encounter relates informant and addressee communicatively with regard to a revelation. The informant, as purveyor of privileged information or knowledge, is often well drawn, sometimes glorified, and at the semiotic level partakes of a program of manipulation that organizes a project of rhetorical persuasion. For the conversion of Placidus, the schema mediating his overwhelming vision and spiritual enlightenment spans several phases of the narrative – from the hunt through the conversion – and coordinates a multifaceted persuasive enterprise. This segment blends multiple discursive registers – biblical, hagiographic, historical, iconographic, and poetic – with various accessory accounts: the wife's vision; an encapsulation of universal history; biblical episodes; and the trials that still await Eustace. As informant, the stag communicates from on high and is, verbally as well as iconically, a mythic mediator – of past and future; nature and culture; divine and terrestrial orders; Old Law and New.² This persuasive appeal combines prophecies, recalls, and anecdotes with various speech acts (injunctions, admonitions, exhortations, warnings, etc.). The message, whose reflexivity is specific to this hunter's circumstances, projects his image onto successive horizons of futurity within a comprehensive providential design.

Our corpus illustrates different types of revelation: messages of transcendental origin, whether divine, like the one addressed to Placidus, or otherwise supernatural; disclosures concerning identity, lineage, and genealogy; depictions of circumstantiality, past or present; proposals of strategies; and so on. Although the content revealed varies considerably in our examples, together they reflect the long-term prestige of revelation during the Middle Ages. Early Christian culture was influential in valorizing revealed truths as determinants of individual life as well as of the fate of polities; political events were typically situated within various schemes of universal history, perceived as a providentially governed *telos* manifested through a series of revelations.³ Saint Augustine emphasized both the individual and the collective perspectives, the *Confessions* recounting his conversion initiated by a specular encounter,⁴ the *De civitate Dei* making the individual's inner crisis of either opting for, or rejecting, God's call to embark on a spiritual peregrination a

fundamental component of historical process.⁵ Augustine anticipates later, widespread depictions of both individual and collective transformations consequent upon divine revelations and directives.⁶

While these tendencies thrive in religiously inspired vernacular narrative and drama, specular encounters reflecting them are seldom mechanically conventional segments devoid of interest or originality. The schema's development varies considerably according to generic intent. In the life of Eustace, the stag is a Christian *merveille*; in Marie's *Guigemar* it partakes of the *merveilleux breton*.⁷ Specular encounters hosting divine revelations are frequent in mystery and miracle plays based on biblical, hagiographic, and folkloric sources,⁸ and in saints' lives that accommodate the schema.⁹ In Old French epics, they buttress the ideology of Christian and imperial designs that are divinely ordained.¹⁰ In the Oxford version of the *Chanson de Roland*, for example, Charlemagne's successive prophetic dreams and visions prescribe political positions and military enterprises and here, at the end of the poem, anticipate a sequel:

Culcez s'est li reis en sa cambre voltice.
Seint Gabriël de part Deu li vint dire:
"Carles, sumun les oz de tun empire!
Par force iras en la tere de Bire,
Reis Vivien si succuras en Imphe,
A la citét que paien unt asise:
Li chrestien te recleiment e criënt."
Li emperere n'i volsist aler mie:
"Deus! dist li reis, si penuse est ma vie!"
Pluret des oilz, sa barbe blanche turet.
(3992–4001)¹¹

[As the king lay in his vaulted bedchamber, Saint Gabriel came to address him on behalf of God: Charles, summon your imperial armies; you shall go in force to the land of Bire and succor King Vivian in Imphe, a city under pagan siege. The Christians are clamoring for you. The emperor did not want to go: God, said the king, how harsh is my life! He wept and tugged his snowy beard.]

In this kind of regulatory role, the schema is commonplace in the *chansons de geste* and, along with a larger assortment of indicators, serves to place the Christian state under divine guidance.¹²

Afterword

As later Old French epics become intergenerically alloyed with elements of romance, the schema's functional range gains in breadth.¹³ In twelfth-century French romance and *lai* the schema rarely features Christian *merveilles*, and though it is on occasion a medium for transcendently revealed truths, it fulfills a variety of functions, as we saw in the works of Marie, Chrétien, and the *Tristan* romances. As the schema begins to serve diverse ends that contrast with or challenge transcendent verities, its canonic revelatory function also diversifies, for example by representing a temporal ethic instead of a divine plan, or a malefic, and not a beneficial, intent. Instead of conveying reliable information, the schema sometimes serves as an instrument of deceit or obfuscation. In spite of such variance, however, its longevity is indicative that the intervention of an informant remained dominant over a long period of time as a model for the constitution of the subject.

As for Arthurian prose romance, we saw in Chapter Two that its frequent specularizing revelations often concern lineage and vast historical progressions, though with varying emphases. While in the cyclic Prose *Lancelot* recurrences of the schema progressively inform the hero of his unique place within a privileged lineage, in the *Queste del saint graal* it proliferates in eremitic glosses moralizing individual adventures as Christian allegory. The legend of Merlin amalgamates conventions of the *breton* supernatural with a quasi-typological conceptualization of history, in a merger brought fully into prominence when the eponymous sage of the Prose *Merlin* reveals to the newly crowned Arthur his realm's location in a vast providential design. However, rather than close the gap between terrestrial and celestial domains frequently in evidence in Arthurian cyclic contexts, such disclosures ultimately serve to widen it. Throughout the *Lancelot-Grail* cycle the specular encounter imparts privileged information to individuals, but only to varying degrees of insufficiency commensurate with their shortcomings – with the single exception of Galaad's ineffable encounter with the absolute. In the *Queste*, allegorical specularizations of knightly adventures are ultimately subordinated in their importance to Galaad's eventual achievement of the grail. Yet when he at last gazes into the depths of the long-sought sacred vessel, the perfect specularity between an immaculate selfhood and a pristine transcendence constitutes a closed vision. In contrast, all other perspectives, even those conditioned by specular encounters

embodying otherworldly and transcendental revelations, are obscured by some degree of cognitive and spiritual privation. Accordingly, after the exclusive specular encounter that ravishes the grail hero from a fallen world, the nefarious worldly course of the cycle accelerates, culminating, in the *Mort le roi Artu*, in a devastating clash of irreconcilable human and political designs. The cleric's tombstone narration of Lancelot's entire *vita* ends the cycle by placing it retrospectively *en abyme*, in a closing *mise en mémoire* specularizing an ideal of love and prowess as relative, and not absolute, qualities in a world of significant differences, a flawed society whose inferences and the actions predicated on them are ultimately alienated from universals. It is apparent that while specular encounters containing revelations in thirteenth-century prose Arthurian narratives in some cases express the doctrinal agendas of authors,¹⁴ more generally their frequency may reflect contemporaneous political and social tensions.¹⁵

RECOGNITIONS

Within the comprehensive dimensions of a story, the specular encounter is normally a primary locus of *qualification*, whereby the specular message is instrumental in the attribution of a new status to its recipient. In this regard it is comparable to the first of three types of "performance" characteristic of folk narratives, that in which the protagonist acquires the requisite qualifications for confronting the ordeals that lie ahead; it prepares the second, main "performance," which tests heroic mettle against an obstacle or an adversary, after which a final phase ascribes a positive or a negative "sanction" to the hero's achievements.¹⁶ In the life of Eustace, for example, the hunter's transformation prepares him to embark on a new, spiritual itinerary; the main performative segment comprised of tribulations leads to the ultimate sanction of martyrdom. This example also shows that in the specular encounter qualification involves acquisition, not of a precious object, as is often the case in folktales, but of privileged information, on which to predicate subsequent performance. Rarely is it a matter of merely finding out something previously unknown, however. A subjective response normally ensues, hence the specular message conditions judgment and *recognition*.

Afterword

In communication theory, such a response would follow a protocol of assent involving perception of the necessity, the certainty, or the truth of the specular appeal.¹⁷ This would in turn modify subjective value-structures, volition, and affective states,¹⁸ ultimately prompting significant behavioral modifications. In literary texts, on the other hand, such operations are normally less clear-cut, if not entirely elided; detailed depictions of how subjective states are progressively modified and brought to the point of assent are especially rare in Old French literature, amatory monologues being one salient exception.¹⁹ Explicit verbal affirmations of recognition and assent are more commonplace in drama than in narrative, and in religious plays this is no doubt attributable to the deliberately instructive design of the argument. Among early plays, one thinks of Adam's lengthy lament, in the *Ordo representationis ade*, after he recognizes the consequences of his sin; or of the Prodigal Son's incisive evaluation of his predicament in *Courtois d'Arras*; in contrast, the protagonist's opening palinode in Adam de la Halle's *Jeu de la feuillée* shows an intuitive response in a secular, non-didactic context.²⁰ In narrative, the cognitive processing of recognitions is seldom described or verbalized, and more often remains implicit at best. In the example of Placidus, where no lengthy monologue or dialogue documents the phases by which the hunter comes to accept the conversion the stag seeks to impose, his affirmative response is implicit in his conformity to the instructions of the supernatural presence. Mere apprehension of new doctrinal knowledge is insufficient, while its unqualified acceptance as an object of belief is imperative: the ephemeral rewards of the hunt are suddenly devalued, the relinquishment of mundane pleasures valorized, and the hunter, overwhelmed by the miraculous vision, prepares to act on his new conviction that he must pursue ultimate spiritual felicity.

In many of our examples, straightforward affirmative responses to recognition are of considerably less interest than the conflicts they may awaken within the addressee. While intratextual and generic expectations would confirm the probability of Charlemagne's compliance with the oneiric mandate at the end of the Oxford *Roland*, the focus is instead on his weary lament: "Deus, dist li reis, si penuse est ma vie!" As in this instance, most responses to a revelation in our sampling sacrifice straightforward portrayal of the mechanisms of assent in favor of more

human, less “theoretically correct” reactions. Alexis twice flees when the celestial voice calls public attention to him. Upon hearing Laudine’s message, Yvain loses his faculties and rushes headlong into the wilderness. Although Erec agrees with Enide’s appraisal of his situation, it is unclear from his agitated yet taciturn behavior how he intends to overcome his *recréantise* or what her role in that effort will be. In Arthurian prose romances, on the other hand, revelations are seldom catalysts, either of the protagonist or of the narrative dynamic. The emphasis is on the past, in disclosures of the protagonists’ previously unsuspected subjection to powerful limiting factors. In such instances, the revelation may be couched in an analeptic, morally tinged commentary.

In our corpus recognition normally pertains to an individual identity or the nature of a situation. The identity type is essential to the life of Eustace and *La Fille du comte de Pontieu*, as part of the story-type of the family reunited after tribulations. Situational recognitions are more numerous: Chrétien’s romances highlight a problematic situation that requires a remedial course of action; later Arthurian romances emphasize self-recognition within a lineal or historical design; retrospective analyses of a tryst tend to involve misrecognitions resulting from faulty reasoning, as in the Chastelaine de Vergi’s distraught monologue.

The latter is a rare instance where negative consequences result from recognition. Another is the aftermath of Raymondin’s discovery of Mélusine’s serpentine nature which, with due account being taken of important differences, is comparable in function to Aristotelian *anagnorisis*, whereby recognition entails painful affect.²¹ In the *Poetics* (Ch. II), Aristotle identifies *peripeteia*, *anagnorisis*, and *pathos* as the three constituents of the nexus of a tragic action. Ideally, *anagnorisis* coincides with a “reversal of the situation,” as in *Oedipus Rex*, the example he cites, and it may bring a new awareness of previously unknown objects, deeds, situations, or identities; this pivotal movement occasions an affective response – “pity or fear” – and culminates in a “scene of suffering.” This dysphoric model is uncommon in our corpus, where most recognitions consequent upon specular encounters eventually entail *amelioration* of circumstances. This corresponds with a dominant tendency in medieval religious drama to make recognition, following

reversal of a downward affective curve, an accessory to *gaudium*, in a closing collective reaffirmation of transcendental verities.²²

The schema's role in effecting a positive cognitive transformation within the addressee of the message is, as we have observed, crucial to the operations of a veridictory modality, *veridiction* being the process by which the cognitive dimension of discourse constructs and signifies the "true" as a discourse-intrinsic condition.²³ As one recent formulation made with Aristotle in mind would have it, recognition is "the narrative pivot, of a cognitive order and . . . the passage from" an erroneous knowledge to "true" knowledge, such "truth" being a construct within the discursive context of the literary work.²⁴ In the specular encounter, veridiction is conditioned from without, by an informant, then internalized by an addressee so as to modify belief and behavior, though generally not, as we have seen, merely to elicit a bald confirmation of subjective change, but rather to bring about other, more significant by-products of recognition. Most of our examples involve revelations that are of relatively little consequence to the auditor/reader, to whom they are in most (though not all) instances already well known, so that the full weight of the revelation's modification of the cognitive dimension occurs within the subjective world of the addressee of the message, while the remainder of the story emphasizes its profound consequences. Moreover, unlike the tragic finality of *anagnorisis*, medieval specular veridiction frequently occurs at an intermediary juncture, where it typically activates a new narrative process that corrects or compensates for some earlier insufficiency and thus moves toward a euphoric culmination.

In medieval literature, exceptions to this general tendency are nonetheless evident, particularly in the category of specular encounters that involve *aberrant recognitions*, of which numerous examples can be found throughout the period under consideration. In our corpus this category is represented by the segments considered in Chapter Three, in which some type of highly consequential misapprehension of true circumstances has to do with a tryst or secret liaison. Here, as we have seen, the agent of misrecognition varies: in the *Charrete* the informant, Meleagant, misreads the signs; in the *Chastelaine de Vergi* it is the Chastelaine as addressee of the specular innuendo who errs; elsewhere clever informants manipulate addressees toward erroneous conclusions:

in Bérout, the role-playing couple deceive Mark in the pine tree; in the Oxford *Folie*, Tantris convinces Iseut that Tristan is dead. Beyond the range of our corpus, many instances similar to the latter two are found in the fabliaux and the *Roman de Renart*, in which cunning deceivers abound, as do encounters that display all of the basic properties of our schema. In Jehan Bodel's *Du vilain de Bailleul*, for example, after the rustic's wife persuasively argues her husband into believing that he is dead, he considers himself powerless to intervene when he sees her consorting with a priest.²⁵ Or again, in the far more ambitious episodic format of Douin de Lavesne's *Trubert*, the eponymous protagonist, a carnivalesque trickster whose antics are in some respects reminiscent of those of Renart, assumes a variety of disguises in order to induce nefarious illusions in his hapless and unsuspecting victims.²⁶ In general, the majority of specular encounters featuring aberrant recognitions in Old French narrative involve either misapprehension of the true nature of a secret or victimization predicated on a manipulatively constructed illusion. Though instances of the latter are more frequently found in the resolutely ludic and humorous *Renart* and the fabliaux, they, too, like the examples involving trysts, raise issues pertinent to the cognitive dimension of narrative and attest to an interest on the part of clerical authors in questions of perception, reasoning, and truth that resonate with contemporaneous intellectual currents.²⁷

Thus, in the works we have considered, revelation and recognition are complementary functions that comprise the core of the schema, defining the respective communicative roles of informant and addressee so as to provide a major locus for the constitution, or more precisely the *reconstitution*, of the subject. Thus organized, the specular encounter ideally complements the tendency, prevalent in medieval narrative, to introduce a new axiological equilibrium into the midst of a story, and it is well suited to an age in which knowledge proffered to the subject from external sources was widely perceived as especially significant and consequential. The frequency of its manifestations also reflects diversifying factors that come to the fore during the twelfth century and remain influential through the later Middle Ages. For the specular encounter begins to find widespread literary expression during the twelfth-century "renaissance," a period of vigorous intellectual and

cultural renewal on several fronts in Western Europe.²⁸ The influence of clerical culture within secular contexts was increasing, notably through a profusion of vernacular texts founded on the substance and techniques of ecclesiastical models of learning; to the avenues of cultural enrichment opened by the Crusades were added the centers of intellectual vitality constituted by patronage in royal and seignorial courts.²⁹ As feudal aristocracies were increasingly marginalized by rapidly maturing mercantile and exchange economies in alliance with monarchies, the demand increased for vernacular literary and historical works that would address the dynamics of social change in new ways.³⁰ The tensions and mutations that from the twelfth century found expression in vernacular texts multiplied the array of situations in which the schema's basic intersubjective mechanism of revelation and recognition could be implemented, bringing different types of value-systems into illuminating confrontations with receptive subjects, and thereby effecting exemplary modifications, both of subjective ethos, and of the cultural coherence of narratives.³¹

While modifying the story's intrinsic coherence, moreover, the rhetoric of the schema's informant could also make an implicit appeal to an audience or a reader. To the extent that it modifies beliefs, cultivates specific attitudes, or expresses ideology, the schema acquires heuristic value by virtualizing reception as it revalorizes the narrative. Explicitly or implicitly, each of its occurrences embodies an illocutionary appeal, or speech act, often an imperative: in *Eustace* there is an "exhortation" to convert; in *Guigemar* a "command" to seek reciprocal love; in certain of Chrétien's crises an "admonition" to attain a higher level of achievement; in family fictions a "mandate" to conceive and implement personal and social agendas with due respect to the moral and political significance of lineage. Within the fiction the addressee's response to the appeal – the so-called "perlocutionary" effect – offers a point of identification where the listener or reader may also apprehend the implicit imperative, whether it be to convert; to assent to certain beliefs; to reconcile personal objectives with social responsibilities; to valorize the genealogical transmission of power; and so forth. In trysts, on the other hand, the schema proffers cautionary examples regarding the reliability of perceptions and unduly precipitous judgments. By conditioning attitudes of reception, the schema exercises a powerfully

“constitutive” type of reflexivity, whereby the informant, while confronting an addressee, also conditions the *judgment* of the reader or listener. In this manner, the specular encounter acquires its capacity to virtualize a “textual community,” to recall Brian Stock’s notion, a community constituted in terms of a certain textual “usage” promoted by the specular appeal.³² And within the context of a work’s initial reception, the schema’s constitutive potential might well have served on occasion to generate reflexive relations on a cultural scale, between text and community.³³

If the specular encounters in these medieval narratives did in fact assume a role in various kinds of cultural transformation and renewal, they would not have done so merely by proposing simple and straightforward exemplary ideals, but rather by heightening tensions and contrasts between inadequate models and desirable alternatives. For, in one way or another, all of our examples attest to a multifaceted concern with the nature and status of the *subject*, not as a monolithic, contradiction-free embodiment of a collective ideology, but rather as a distinct entity whose particular universe of values might be destabilized through confrontation with an ideological “other.” One thinks here of the distinction recently drawn, with reference to the *Chanson de Roland*, by Peter Haidu, who sees in the hero of the Oxford *Roland* a representative of what he calls “the old subjectivity”: “The subject in question is that of self-identity, a subject of total integrity . . . there is no prior, internal dissension requiring (re)constitution . . . no gap between between ‘him’ and his ideology: he states it, clearly and succinctly, he lives it, and never varies from it . . . Roland is . . . a subject constituted completely and perfectly by the ideology of his time . . . [there is] a perfect fit between act and deontology [and an] *absence of constitutive self-consciousness, of a critical, self-reflexive structure*, in the narrative subject . . .”³⁴ To the extent that, over the course of the poem, Roland maximally approaches this degree of seamless integrity, as he does when, at death’s door, he voices a litany of his heroic deeds, and we see clearly that his inner life is but a replica of his ideal agency in service to Charlemagne (laisse CLXXII), the notion of specular encounter becomes meaningless, except as a zero-degree, tautological convergence of self and society in a single ethos, as legend becomes myth.³⁵ In contrast with this “old subjectivity,” Haidu posits a “contemporary theory of the

subject – its cleavage, its felt contradictions, its nonidentity with itself, its subsistence in and against the trace of the other . . . ,” embodying a “critical, self-reflexive structure . . . [with] potentials of reflexivity and critique, of a subjectivity closer to what will later be posited as the ‘Cartesian subject.’”³⁶ Subjectivity in this sense becomes a locus of differentiation, of tensions, of potential conflict and ethical dichotomization, whether between subjectivity and objective spheres or as a split within the subject itself. And with this kind of “conflictualizable” subjectivity comes the potential for development of the specular encounter as a mediatory appeal to the subject to discriminate inwardly between an effete or nefarious model and a viable alternative.

It would appear that in Western Europe during the twelfth century this second type of subjectivity gained ascendancy on a dramatically broadened scale – or more likely *regained* it, after centuries of subdominance. By the end of the eleventh century the so-called “old” subjectivity had been formally constituted and contextualized within multiple secular and ecclesiastical spheres of feudal society, and the monological propensities of the Oxford *Roland*, no less than the paucity of vernacular, mostly religious texts between the ninth century and the end of the eleventh century suggest that, within the intellectual communities producing texts, there was still a considerable potential for nonconflictual subjective solidarity with institutional spheres.³⁷ In marked contrast, from the early twelfth century we find vernacular literary texts proliferating in dramatically greater numbers and generic diversity, and also dwelling in various ways and to varying degrees on the potential for acute conflicts or even outright contradictions between the collective solidarity presupposed by feudal institutions and the private, subjective desires and aspirations that might clash with them.³⁸ Suggested thereby are stresses symptomatic of, as well as conducive to, evolving modes of accommodation. Moreover, a wide range of literary works persistently raise fundamental issues concerning the status and functional purview of the subject both apart from and within social hierarchies. One question in particular is implied in myriad ways in vernacular narratives: given a contradiction between collective norms and individual initiatives, is it possible to formulate an ethic of the critical, self-conscious subject that is not harmful or destructive to institutional integrity, and if so, what is the latitude, and what are the

modalities, for effecting accommodations between the former and the latter?

This is precisely the kind of question addressed by the specular encounter, which confronts the subject both with an ethically significant disclosure and with an image of subjectivity that is in some fashion articulated with a larger context, be it interpersonal, familial and lineal, more generally social, or in some cases cosmo-theological. Our examples suggest that poets found this schema featuring a crisis of consciousness triggered by a sudden and dramatic increase in self-knowledge to be especially well suited to depictions of the subject engaged in negotiations of various institutional hierarchies. Its prominence is indicative of a general interest in the cognitive dimension of narrative and in the discovery, or more properly the *rediscovery*, of subjectivity as a complex mediation of competing private and public imperatives, rather than as a microcosmic embodiment of a monolithic social category.

Within that larger problematic, the specular encounter might be characterized in terms not of the “individual” who “discovers” the “self” – supposedly a twelfth-century mutation much discussed some years ago – but rather of the subject’s reconstitution in mid-career.³⁹ In our examples the subject is not reconstituted in an axiological vacuum, however. The mirror relocates the subject within a valorized context, be it familial, social, or theological, and the informant normally projects onto the horizon of the subject in the process of transformation the distant profile of a virtual, transformed subject. Hence the specular encounter’s characteristic emphasis on the heuristic value of two constrastive images of subjectivity, as well as its provision of a potential space within which to construct an ethic of accommodation between competing spheres of experience. Depending upon the type and relative exemplarity of the subject, the nature of the spheres in question, and the acuity of tensions between them, the degree of accommodation may vary considerably, from an integrative kind of solidarity at one extreme, to extremely ironic and precarious mediations at the other. Hence the appropriateness of the specular encounter on the “morning after” no less than on the threshold of a new life.

In closing, it is tempting to speculate briefly, and of necessity tentatively, on the schema’s subsequent, post-medieval fortunes. In view

of its vitality over the relatively extended period represented by the texts we have examined, one might anticipate that the specular encounter would not suddenly have vanished from the scene. In both texts and cultural contexts, the possibilities for further exploration of its manifestations are numerous and widely varied. Let us merely allude at random to a few cases where its operative reflexivity effects distortions with highly suggestive cultural implications. During Bishop Jacques Fournier's inquisitorial trial (1318–25), the depositions by the citizens of Montailhou and its environs, made in their local idioms – either Occitan or Gascon – were hastily set down by a scribe, then revised more formally in a “minute,” either in Latin or the urbane vernacular, whereupon “a spoken translation back into the ‘vulgar tongue’ was made when the accused had the text of the minute read out to them so that they could have alterations made if they wished,” after which it was recorded definitively in Latin, in a ledger that made its way, via Avignon, to the Vatican. In sum, after having been extracted from them, the autobiographical stories of the accused were represented back to them, though orally and thus ephemerally, as “distanced” mirrors that had already entered the process of linguistic and ideological alienation.⁴⁰ Or, from the latter half of the fifteenth century, we find a well-known instance of dramatic play with the schema's conventions, when a draper, eager to collect the promised payment for a bolt of cloth, is confronted by Pathelin's dramatized logorrhea and delirium, a performance that brings the bewildered merchant to the point of assenting to a bogus version of his own prior and current circumstances.⁴¹ Less than a century later, the manipulative impostor Arnaud du Tilh, alias Martin Guerre, bore an uncanny resemblance to his thirteenth-century precursor, Bertrand de Rains, the hermit who in 1225 materialized in the guise of Baldwin IX of Flanders and Hainaut; both sought to induce a collective illusion of an alternate reality, a “possible world” that in each case profoundly destabilized social self-perceptions and awakened latent conflicts.⁴² From the nineteenth century, the age of the asylum, one could cite, from among the psychiatric techniques of Pinel at Bicêtre, the one identified by Michel Foucault as “la reconnaissance en miroir,” whereby, for “therapeutic” ends, the deluded self-images of the insane were *ratified* by their supervisors in positive specular evaluations.⁴³ Somewhat later, on the

threshold of modernity, the schema finds new intersubjective reconceptualizations in Freudian and post-Freudian models of transference and countertransference.⁴⁴

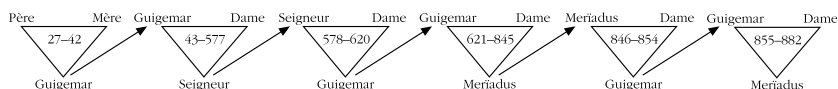
In short, multiple examples from both literature and life could be adduced in support of the hypothesis that the schema persists into the Early Modern and Modern periods, and, most likely, throughout human history, though not without undergoing ceaseless modification in response to changing cultural constraints. For although the persistent aspect of the schema would be its form of content – its infrastructure – the substance of content it vehicles would display myriad degrees of variance over time.⁴⁵ And to scholars would fall the delicate, delightful, and endless task of sifting through its successive sedimentations, to bring to light narratives that, while in many ways distant, both from us and from one another, are in their formal properties strangely familiar.

Appendix

Note: each triad contains the verse numbers of the narrative segment it designates

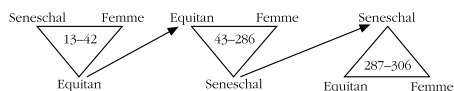
ANALYSIS OF TRIADIC STRUCTURE IN THE LAIS OF MARIE DE FRANCE

Guigemar



Guigemar's father sends him away from home to receive a chivalric education (triad 1). After the hind enjoins him to seek reciprocity in love, his relationship with the sequestered lady leaves her jealous husband in the position of excluded third (triad 2); he in turn expels Guigemar from the realm (triad 3). Triads 2 and 3 are then replicated in triads 4 and 5: the couple are reunited by the tokens of recognition they had exchanged, much to the consternation of Meriadus (triad 4), the lord who claims the lady and defies Guigemar (triad 5); Guigemar slays him and spirits the lady away (triad 6).

Equitan

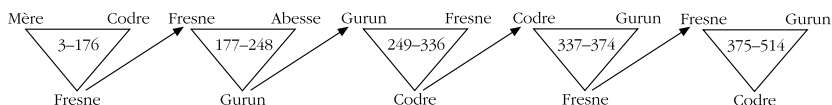


Initially, marriage presupposes Equitan's exclusion from a reciprocal love relationship with the seneschal's wife (triad 1), but their affair transgresses this constraint (triad 2). In the closing configuration (triad 3),

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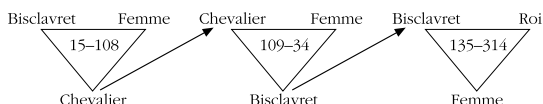
ironically, the wronged husband is triumphant: he excludes the reciprocal relation itself, through homicidal elimination of the adulterous couple.

Le Fresne



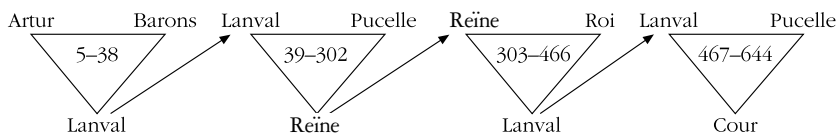
When she is still a newborn infant, Le Fresne is separated from her twin sister, La Codre, and exiled from the mother/daughter relation (triad 1). This is compensated when she is adopted by a mother surrogate, the abbess, a relation that initially poses an obstacle to her union with Gurun (triad 2). He finally negotiates her release from the abbey, though this reciprocal love relation conflicts with the marriage his vassals envisage for him, to La Codre (triad 3), which they finally succeed in imposing, thus excluding Le Fresne (triad 4). Following Le Fresne's generous relinquishment of the tokens of her identity and consequent recognition by her mother, she and Gurun are married (triad 5).

Bisclavret



In the initial situation, Bisclavret's marriage presupposes exclusion of his wife's suitor (triad 1), who then colludes with Bisclavret's wife to banish him from her bed, their marriage, even from the realm of humanity itself (triad 2). While he is in his animal state, his courtly demeanor entails a reciprocal relation with the king, as well as his wife's banishment (triad 3).

Lanval

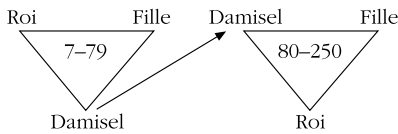


Failure to win merited *largesse* from King Arthur sets Lanval apart from

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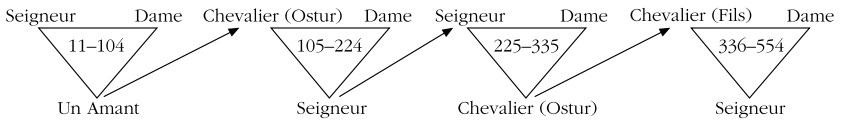
the other knights at court (triad 1) and leads in compensation to his secret pact with the otherworldly maiden, a relation that, along with the royal marriage, precludes his relation to the queen (triad 2). Lanval fails to respect this pact: to foil the queen's advances he alludes to the maiden's superiority; then the queen mendaciously alienates him from the king, leaving Lanval at odds both with the court and the otherworld (triad 3), until the fairy returns to vindicate him and take him away from the court (triad 4).

Deus Amanz



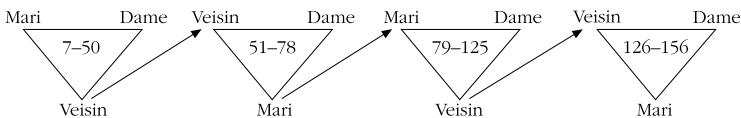
Initially, the lovelorn suitor is kept at bay by the king's jealous, overprotective relationship with his daughter (triad 1). Their stratagem leads to her ultimate separation from the king, but, on account of the suitor's failure to use the potion, they are united only in death (triad 2).

Yonec



The *mal mariée's* unhappy marriage awakens her desire for an ideal lover (triad 1); this is fulfilled by her affair with the hawk-knight (triad 2), then foiled when the jealous husband kills him (triad 3). When he hears his mother's story, the lovers' son becomes the surrogate of his dead father, avenging the latter by slaying his stepfather (triad 4).

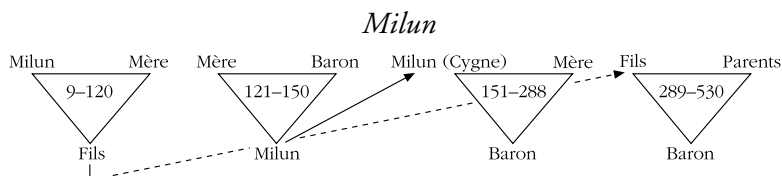
Laüstic



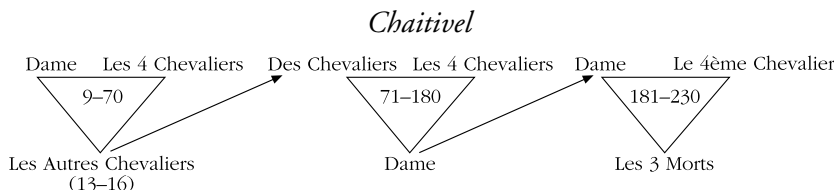
In *Laüstic* a marital union presupposes exclusion of a lover for the wife (triad 1); the lovers' nocturnal communication nonetheless deceives the

Appendix

husband (triad 2) until he separates them by killing the wife's avian pretext for talking to her lover (triad 3). The lovers' relation is nonetheless symbolically perennialized by the reliquary containing the nightingale (triad 4).



In *Milun*, one triadic complex is imbricated within another. Initially, the lovers' illegitimate son is exiled in infancy (triad 1); at the end, he is reunited with his true parents, the chief obstacle to this resolution, the mother's husband, having died (triad 4). The two intermediate segments depict, first Milun's exclusion through the marriage arranged by the nobleman for his daughter (triad 2), then the lengthy epistolary intimacy between her and Milun, mediated by a messenger swan (triad 3).

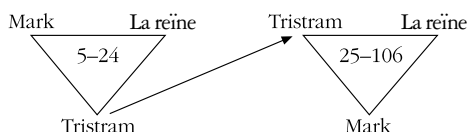


In an ironic initial exclusion (triad 1), the lady has secretly chosen four co-equal beneficiaries of her love while rejecting a much larger contingent of suitors, so that in this case both S_2 and the excluded third term of the initial triad are represented by a plurality. (It will be remembered that "subjects" are not equivalent to the represented "persons" in the story. The former category may thus be occupied, successively or even simultaneously, by a plurality of represented persons. See Greimas, "Les Actants," *Du Sens: Essais Sémiotiques*, Paris: Seuil 1970, p. 49.) This example shows how the subject, an abstract component of narrative organization, may be invested with multiple characters in the same role, in this instance, to magnify the lady's indecisiveness and vanity. She opts to love only four of her many suitors, then witnesses the two groups' engagement in a tournament.

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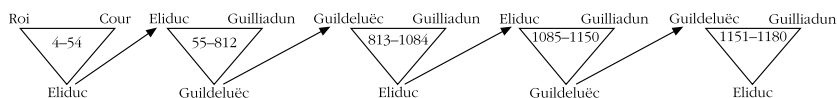
Three of her chosen knights are killed, but her inability to forget her devotion to them prevents her from reconciling herself to love the fourth (triad 2). She is nonetheless symbolically paired with him at the end, when she consents to name her *lai* for this disconsolate survivor (the “Chaitivel”) (triad 3).

Chievrefoil



While echoing the other *lais* featuring role-exchange between husband and lover, *Chievrefoil* introduces the most notorious of all such medieval stories, the *Roman de Tristan*, evoking details from multiple versions. This *lai* depicts one instance of how the marital union precluding the lovers’ affair (triad 1) is transgressed by a clandestine encounter (triad 2). (The exclusion of the husband, King Mark, is somewhat relativized by the queen’s allusion to a recent conversation with him, in which his reconciliation with Tristan was considered [97–101].)

Eliduc



As in *Lanval*, failure to reward surpassing merit initially alienates the eponymous knight (triad 1). Eliduc’s move to England entails divided loyalties to his *amie* and to his wife (triad 2). This prolonged state of affairs culminates in the revealing encounter between Guildeluëc and Guilliadun (triad 3), followed by the former’s retirement from the world in favor of the latter’s marriage to Eliduc (triad 4). Years later, she joins Guildeluëc in a convent, while Eliduc retires to a monastery (triad 5). (At the level of narrative functionality, Eliduc is literally separated from them, while the discourse valorizes their common participation in a spiritual union of a higher order.)

Notes

INTRODUCTION

- 1 The first hero in Western literature to hear an account of his own adventures is Ulysses (*The Odyssey*, Bk. 8). See L. Dällenbach, *Le Récit spéculaire: Essai sur la mise en abyme*, Paris: Seuil, 1977, pp. 113–15. The recognition scene in Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* is related to the kind of encounter at issue in this study as are the many prophecies in Virgil's *Aeneid*.
- 2 B. Bart and R. Cook, *The Legendary Sources of Flaubert's 'Saint Julian'*, University of Toronto Press, 1977, pp. 3–39, 60–93, and 101–04.
- 3 For related psychoanalytic perspectives on this story, see W. Berg, M. Grimaud, and W. Moschowitz, *Saint Oedipus: Psychocritical Approaches to Flaubert's Art*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982.
- 4 The *specular encounter* is a rubric of my own invention, which I introduced in “Specular Stories, Family Romance, and the Fictions of Courtly Culture,” *Exemplaria*, 3 (1991), 299–326.
- 5 It is “au moins aussi ancienne que la première version rimée,” according to its editor: *La Vie de Saint Eustace, version en prose française du XIII^e siècle*, ed. J. Murray, Paris: Champion, 1929, p. iii. On Old French versions, see P. Meyer, “Légendes hagiographiques en français,” *HLEF*, 33 (1906), 381–85.
- 6 See A. Monteverdi, “I Testi della leggenda di S. Eustachio,” *SM*, 3 (1908–11), 392–498. A brief, eighth-century Greek account by John of Damascus is the earliest known survival of the legend. From the tenth century longer versions appeared both in Latin and in the European vernaculars. Meyer, 348–49, lists eleven versions in verse, of which one, extant in two copies (Madrid, Bibl. Nat. 9446; Paris, Bibl. Sainte-Geneviève 792) was edited by H. Peterson, *La Vie de Saint Eustache, poème français du XIII^e siècle*, Paris: Champion, 1928.
- 7 For an analysis of the hunt in an Old English version of the legend, Aelfric's *Passion of St. Eustace*, see M. Thiébaux, *The Stag of Love: The Chase in Medieval Literature*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974, pp. 60–66.
- 8 While independent of any context, it comprises a minimal structural armature, its textualizations may vary considerably in amplitude. We shall see that it displays considerable elasticity, ranging from a word or phrase to a substantial segment of text.

- 9 On the couple in this life, see D. Robertson, *The Medieval Saints' Lives: Spiritual Renewal and Old French Literature*, Lexington, Ky.: French Forum, 1995, pp. 24; 234–36.
- 10 In his *Moralia*, Gregory the Great comments on Satan's temptation of Job with God's permission. See J. B. Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984, pp. 98–99; "Gregory's idea is that God does permit the Devil to accost humanity, but in the knowledge that the elect will not yield and will only be strengthened by the assault" (99).
- 11 See T. Heffernan, "An Analysis of the Narrative Motifs in the Legend of St. Eustace," *M&H*, New Series 6 (1975), 63–89, and Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and their Biographers in the Middle Ages*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 123, 142.
- 12 On hagiographic paradigms, see Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, pp. 3–37.
- 13 This Johannine tradition makes Christ the Son, whom the Credo qualifies as "ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula," the Logos that created the world (John 1:3: "Verbum . . . omnia per ipsum facta sunt." Cf. John 1:10 and Col. 1:16). See K. Ruh, "Die trinitarische Spekulation in deutscher Mystik und Scholastik," *ZfdP*, 72 (1953), 24–53, esp. 29 and note 14.
- 14 On analogies between the hagiographic *vita* and the life of Christ, see Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, p. 5; A. Vauchez, "Lay People's Sanctity in Western Europe: Evolution of a Pattern (Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries)," in *Images*, pp. 21–32; and G. Penco, "L'Imitazione di Cristo nell'agiografia monastica," *Coll. Cist.*, 28 (1966), 17–34.
- 15 Heffernan notes that the earliest mention of St. Eustace, by John of Damascus in his *De Imaginibus* of 726, is contemporary with the iconoclastic controversy and written by the leading opponent of the iconoclasts. "It seems likely that the Eustace legend with its use of miraculous images, especially that of the stag, would be favored by this anti-iconoclastic faction of the clerical hierarchy" ("Analysis," 67).
- 16 Cf. Thiébaux, "the mutually dependent and interchangeable polarities of hunter and hunted that were familiar in the sacral hunts of antiquity (notably the Dionysian) become converted to a paradox meaningful in terms of the Christian sacrifice. The Christian martyr both pursues and emulates the divine victim, who in turn permits Himself to be harried to death in order to allure and captivate mankind" (*Stag of Love*, p. 65).
- 17 For example, in Jean Renart's *Galeran de Bretagne*, ed. L. Foulet, Paris: Champion, 1971, 2141–52: "Les maulx d'Amours endurer vueil. / De tant se vantent bien my oeil / Qui bien ont servy leur seigneur: / Mieulx vaillant proie ne greigneur / Ne puent il mes pourchassier / Pour moy servir ne solacier. / Servir? Qu'ay je dit? J'ay mespris, / Qu'il ont tant chassié qu'ilz sont pris: / Si va le char davant les buefs; / Chasser cuiderent a mon oez: / S'avient souvent tel chiet qui chasse, / La proye a pris le chiens en chasse." Here the eyes are amatory hunters captured by their quarry. Froissart, in his *Chroniques*, tells of a hunter who, while pursuing a bear, heard a voice proclaim: "Tu me chaces, et si ne te vueil nul

- dommaige; mais tu mourras de male mort.” Froissart, *Oeuvres*, ed. K. de Lettenhove, Brussels: Devaux, 1870, vol. xi, p. 104.
- 18 On *Eustace* as “hagiographical romance,” see Robertson, *Medieval Saints’ Lives*, p. 248.
- 19 Among related items in S. Thompson’s *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*: P401 – disclosure of paternity; A155.10 and F234.2.2 – supernatural guides; J0 to J199 – “Acquisition and possession of wisdom (knowledge)”; M300–M399 – “Prophecies”; M300–M399 – “Curses.”
- 20 See M. Ferguson, “Folklore in the *Lais* of Marie de France,” *RR*, 57 (1966), 3–24.
- 21 Of course “Speaking stag” hardly matches the vituperative *hind* in *Guigemar*.
- 22 Thus among the “motifs” identified by S. Thompson that Ferguson cites in *Guigemar*: 1. Hunter. 2. White as magic color. 3. Tabu of wounding an animal. 4. Speaking stag. 5. Curse by wounded animal. 6. Only one person able to heal wound. 7. Arrow as boomerang. 8. Self-propelled boat. 9. Extraordinary bed. 10. Unnaturally long sleep. 11. Transportation in magic ship.” And so on through the story. Items 1, 4 and 6 designate thematic roles; 5 a malediction; 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, and 11 properties of the marvelous. While item 12, “Magic journey,” refers to a segment of the main narrative, item 13, “Foolish marriage of old man and young girl,” designates a situation anterior to the events in the story. This undigested heterogeneity brings to mind the caveat issued by A. Guerreau-Jalabert, *Index des motifs narratifs dans les romans arthuriens français en vers* (XIIe–XIIIe siècles), Geneva: Droz, 1992, p. 15: “la somme, si complète soit-elle, des motifs retenus pour tel ou tel épisode ne permet en aucun cas d’en restituer, même approximativement, la matière.”
- 23 On the imprecision of indexed motifs, see K. Lichtblau, “Index des motifs narratifs dans la littérature profane allemande des origines à 1400,” *BBSIA*, 37 (1985), p. 313; and Guerreau-Jalabert, 3–15. By the latter, see also “Romans de Chrétien de Troyes et contes folkloriques: Rapprochements thématiques et observations de méthode,” *Rom*, 104 (1983), 1–48, and the review of E. H. Ruck, *An Index of Themes and Motifs in Twelfth-Century French Arthurian Poetry*, Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 1991, by J.-P. Martin, *CCM*, 37 (1994), 158–59.
- 24 Cf. Martin on the “atomisation” and “classement arbitraire” of motifs: *Les Motifs dans la chanson de geste: Définition et utilisation* (*Discours de l’épopée médiévale*, 1). Villeneuve d’Ascq: Centre d’Etudes Médiévales et Dialectales de Lille III, 1992, p. 50.
- 25 On the form and substance of content, see L. Hjelmslev, *Prolégomènes à une théorie du langage*, trans. U. Canger, Paris: Minuit, 1971, pp. 73–79.
- 26 P. Zumthor, “Merlin dans le *Lancelot-Graal*: Etude thématique,” in *Graal*, p. 159.
- 27 Among the kinds of schemata Zumthor envisages are characters, such as the handsome coward or the kitchen knave; situations, such as royal counsel or insular single combat; and emblems, for example the sword in the stone.
- 28 For Zumthor, the figure of Merlin would be a schematic type, its essential motifs – “prophecy,” “supernatural diabolical origin,” and “affirmation of . . . omnis-

- cience” – forming a stable nucleus around which other motifs are optional: “Arthur’s protector”; “the teaching of magic”; “proteism”; “healer”, etc.
- 29 Zumthor, “Merlin,” in *Graal*, p. 60. Such a schematic “type” would be “le Service du Graal” which, according to Zumthor, became a dominant type during the early thirteenth century; while the figure of Merlin in the Vulgate Cycle had become a definitive schema by the second quarter of the thirteenth century (p. 64).
- 30 In J. Taylor, “Melusine’s Progeny: Patterns and Perplexities,” in *Melusine*, 165–84, we see how Jean d’Arras consistently makes idiosyncratic use of – or “blocks” – several traditional narrative schemata in his *Roman de Mélusine*, most likely in order to further the political objectives of the work’s patron, Jean, Duc de Berry.
- 31 In some instances they are indispensable, as when “on ne peut pas isoler dans sa spécificité la signification prise en un temps et en un lieu donnés par un conte qu’au moyen d’une étude comparée avec les formes que ce même conte a prises en d’autres temps et en d’autres lieux. L’approche diachronique décrit le *comment* des transformations, l’approche synchronique élucide leur *pourquoi*.” C. Bremond, “La Famille séparée,” *Com*, 39 (1984), p. 4. For a recent diachronic study of a specific story type, see M. Speer, “*Translatio* as *Inventio*: Gaston Paris and the ‘Treasure of Rhampsinitus’ (*Gaza*) in the *Dolopathos* Romance,” in *Transtext*, 125–55.
- 32 Cf. C. Segre, who distinguishes between “schemata of representability, or stereotypes,” and the “linguistic realization of these schemata.” C. Segre, “Dal motivo alla funzione, e viceversa,” in *Notizie dalla crisi: Dove va la critica letteraria?*, Turin: Einaudi, 1993, p. 217.
- 33 See G. Prince, “Introduction à l’étude du narrataire,” *Poétique*, 14 (1973), 178–96; and G. Genette, *Figures III*, Paris: Seuil, 1973, pp. 227, 265–67.
- 34 The mediations to which the schema plays host are comparable to Propp’s view of mediation in bringing a misfortune or a lack to the hero’s attention. V. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, ed. L. Wagner; trans. L. Scott, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968, chapter three.
- 35 Messages paraphrased by a narrative voice in indirect discourse and those conveyed by a figural or a symbolic representation are far less numerous.
- 36 For essential background, see R. McKeon, “The Methods of Rhetoric and Philosophy: Invention and Judgment,” in *Caplan*, pp. 367–68.
- 37 Cf. P. Zumthor, “Les Planctus épiques,” *Rom*, 84 (1963), 61–69.
- 38 On illocutionary, or speech, acts, such as asserting, questioning, commanding, exhorting, expressing a wish, etc., see J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford University Press, 1962; J. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge University Press, 1969; M. L. Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977.
- 39 Greimas contrasts the modality of “actualization” (*faire*) with the “virtualizing” modalities that condition an act in the domains of volition, power, knowledge, and duty (*vouloir*, *pouvoir*, *savoir*, and *devoir*): A. J. Greimas, “Eléments d’une grammaire narrative,” *Du Sens*, Paris: Seuil, 1970, 157–83, and “Pour une théorie

des modalités,” *Du Sens II: Essais sémiotiques*, Paris: Seuil, 1983, pp. 67–91. In our corpus, the actualizing response of the addressee varies, e.g., in Placidus’s conversion; Equitan’s compliance with a set of prescriptions; Erec’s abrupt departure with Enide for new adventures; Mark’s assent to the delusive dramatization of Tristan and Iseut in Béroul’s romance; Lancelot’s preservation of his secret love affair with the queen in the *Charrete*, etc.

- 40 For numerous examples of the latter, see Chapter Three, on the “courtly tryst.”
- 41 Dällenbach, *Récit*, p. 52, translation my own.
- 42 He considers three primary levels at which specularity tends to occur in narrative: the *énoncé*, or recounted story; the *énonciation*, or narrative voice; and the *code*, or metatextual reflexive representations of literary production (*ibid.*, pp. 76–183).
- 43 Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au lion (Yvain)*, ed. M. Roques, Paris: Champion, 1980, 173–580.
- 44 See M.-L. Ollier, “Le discours en ‘abyrne’ ou la narration équivoque,” *MR*, 1 (1974), 351–64.
- 45 On these categories, see Genette, *Figures III*, pp. 95–105, and, *Nouveau discours du récit*, Paris: Seuil, 1983, pp. 17–20. On reflexivity in *Yvain*, see J. Grimberty, *Yvain dans le miroir: Une poétique de la réflexion dans le “Chevalier au lion” de Chrétien de Troyes*, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1988.
- 46 Chrétien de Troyes, *Guillaume d’Angleterre*, ed. M. Wilmotte, Paris: Champion, 1927, 2768–804.
- 47 See *La Vie de Saint Alexis*, ed. C. Storey, Oxford: Blackwell, 1968, (281–85; 346–85). On this example and on the “bâton” in Marie de France’s *Chievrefoil* as instances of “le récit du récit,” see Dällenbach, *Récit*, pp. 119–22.
- 48 On retrospective *mise en abyme*, see Dällenbach, *Récit*, pp. 87–89; on analepses, see Genette, *Figures III*, pp. 95–105, and *Nouveau discours du récit*, pp. 17–20.
- 49 See S. Sturm-Maddox, “King Arthur’s Prophetic Fool: Prospection in the *Conte du graal*,” *MRom*, 29 (1979), 103–8. On *mise en abyme prospective*, see Dällenbach, *Récit*, pp. 83–87; on prolepsis, see Genette, *Figures III*, pp. 105–15, and *Nouveau discours*, p. 21.
- 50 See A. Limentani, “Effetti di specularità nella narrativa medievale,” *Rzfl/CHLR*, 2/3 (1980), 307–20; and E. P. Nolan, *Now Through a Glass Darkly: Specular Images of Being and Knowing from Virgil to Chaucer*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1990.
- 51 W. and F. Calin, “Medieval Fiction and New Novel: Some Polemical Remarks on the Subject of Narrative,” *YFS*, 51 (1974), 235–50; L. De Looze, “A Story of Interpretations: the *Queste del saint graal* as Metaliterature,” *RR*, 76 (1985), 129–47; on Chrétien’s *Chevalier de la charrete*, see M. T. Bruckner, *Shaping Romance: Interpretation, Truth, and Closure in Twelfth-Century French Fictions*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, chapter 3. On *mise en abyme* in the *chanson de geste*, see S. Kay, *The “Chansons de geste” in the Age of Romance*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, pp. 201–07. The notion of *mise en abyme*, originally appropriated from the domain of heraldry, has been applied inconsistently to various medieval narrative contexts. Whereas Dällenbach’s definition captures the heraldic sense of a field containing a smaller simulacrum of its *totality*

(“est mise en abyme tout miroir interne réfléchissant l'ensemble du récit par reduplication simple, répétée, ou spéculaire” [*Récit*, p. 52, my emphasis]), some critics identify as instances of *mise en abyme* passages that do not reflect the comprehensive dimensions of the host text.

- 52 See J. Lods, “‘Le baiser de la reine’ et ‘le cri de la fée’: Etude structurale du *Bel Inconnu* de Renaut de Beaujeu,” in *Jonin*, pp. 415–26; M. L. Meneghetti, “Duplicazione e specularità nel romanzo arturiano (dal ‘Bel Inconnu’ al ‘Lancelot-Graal’),” in *Köhler*, pp. 206–17. On specular bipartition in *Ami et Amile*, see C. Segre, “Due casi di ‘gemelli’ per amicizia: Contributo alla definizione del *motivo*,” in *Notizie dalla crisi*, pp. 227–37. The comprehensive organization of a large multitextual ensemble may also be reflexive; on the *Canzoniere* of Petrarch, for example, see S. Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch’s Laurels*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992, Chapter Six.
- 53 See C. Segre, “Da uno specchio all’altro: La luna e la terra nell’*Orlando furioso*,” in *Fuori del mondo: I modelli nella follia e nelle immagini dell’aldilà*, Turin: Einaudi, 1990, pp. 103–14.
- 54 See M. Speer, “Specularity in a Formulaic Frame Romance: ‘The Faithful Greyhound’ and the *Roman des Sept Sages*,” in *Aspects*, pp. 233–42.
- 55 J.-C. Huchet, *Le Roman médiéval*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984, pp. 55–59; Huchet, “L’*Enéas*: Un Roman spéculaire,” in *Relire*, pp. 63–82.
- 56 J. Frappier, “Variations sur le thème du miroir, de Bernard de Ventadour à Maurice Scève,” *CAIEF*, 11 (1959), 134–58; E. Köhler, “Narcisse, la fontaine d’amour et Guillaume de Lorris,” in *L’Humanisme*, pp. 147–66; F. Goldin, *The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric*, Ithaca, N.Y. Cornell University Press, 1967; J. Rychner, “Le Mythe de la fontaine de Narcisse dans le *Roman de la rose* de Guillaume de Lorris,” in *Eigeldinger*, pp. 33–46; L. Hillman, “Another Look into the Mirror Perilous: The Role of the Crystals in the *Roman de la rose*,” *Rom*, 101 (1980), 225–38; D. Hult, “The Allegorical Fountain: Narcissus in the *Roman de la rose*,” *RR*, 72 (1981), 125–48; J. Kessler, “La Quête amoureuse et poétique: La Fontaine de Narcisse dans le *Roman de la rose*,” *RR*, 73 (1982), 133–46; J. Fleming, “The Garden of the *Roman de la rose*: Vision of Landscape or Landscape of Vision?,” in *Gardens*, pp. 201–34; M. P. Harley, “Narcissus, Hermaphroditus, and Attis: Ovidian Lovers at the Fontaine d’Amors in Guillaume de Lorris’s *Roman de la rose*,” *PMLA*, 101 (1986), 324–37; E. Baumgartner, “The Play of Temporalities; or, The Reported Dream of Guillaume de Lorris,” in *Rethinking*, pp. 21–38. On the mirror of Oiseuse: J. Friedman, “L’Iconographie de Vénus et de son miroir à la fin du Moyen Age,” in *L’Erotisme*, pp. 51–82, and E. J. Richards, “Reflections on Oiseuse’s Mirror: Iconographic Tradition, Luxuria and the *Roman de la rose*,” *ZfrP*, 98 (1982), 296–311.
- 57 On the question of optics, see P. Eberle, “The Lovers’ Glass: Nature’s Discourse on Optics and the Optical Design of the *Romance of the Rose*,” *UTQ*, 46 (1976–77), 241–62, and R. Brusegan, “Jean de Meun, Alhazen, Witelo: Influenza delle teorie medievali della visione sul *Roman de la rose*,” in *Folena*, pp. 263–79. “Ciò che interessa in particolare a Jean de Meun sono le *decevanças*, le menzogne, gli artifici che gli specchi possono produrre” (271). See also F. G. Tesson, “Le

- Pion souvenir et les miroirs déformants dans l'allégorie d'amour," in *Jeux*, pp. 99–108.
- 58 See P. Zumthor, "Récit et anti-récit: Le *Roman de la rose*," in *Langue, texte, énigme*, Paris: Seuil, 1975, pp. 249–67. See also S. Huot, *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987, pp. 83–106; Goldin, *Mirror*, pp. 52–68; D. Poirion, "Narcisse et Pygmalion dans le *Roman de la rose*," in *Solano*, pp. 153–65; M. Thut, "Narcisse versus Pygmalion: Une lecture du *Roman de la rose*," *VR*, 41 (1982), 104–32; and A. Strubel, "L'Allégorisation du verger courtois," in *Vergers*, pp. 343–57.
- 59 See R. Dragonetti, "Pygmalion ou les pièges de la fiction dans le *Roman de la rose*," in *Orbis*, pp. 89–111, and J. Dornbush, *Pygmalion's Figure: Reading Old French Romance*, Lexington, Ky.: French Forum, 1990, pp. 49–98.
- 60 D. Kelly, *Internal Difference and Meanings in the "Roman de la rose"*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995. See in particular "The Mirror and 'Cases'," pp. 149–51. On intertextually reflexive elements, see also N. F. Regalado, "'Des Contraires choses': La Fonction poétique de la citation et des *exempla* dans le *Roman de la rose* de Jean de Meun," *Littérature* 41 (1981), 62–81. These studies complement others that offer insights on the features of the *Rose* that are constitutive of reception, both as an historical phenomenon and as a virtuality to be variously fulfilled by readers. On aspects of the former, see P.-Y. Badel, *Le Roman de la rose au xive siècle: Etude de la réception de l'oeuvre*, Geneva: Droz, 1980, and H. Arden, "The Influence of the *Roman de la rose*," in *The Roman de la rose: an Annotated Bibliography*, New York: Garland, 1993, pp. 265–364. On the latter issue, see K. Brownlee, "Reflections in the *Miroër aus Amoreus*: The Inscribed Reader in Jean de Meun's *Roman de la rose*," in *Mimesis*, 1982), pp. 60–70, and D. Hult, *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First "Roman de la rose"*, Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- 61 See the recent collection of essays on medieval rewriting in *Opus*.
- 62 In the *chansons de geste* the schema sometimes plays host to intertextual allusions to other poems in a cycle, as in *Le Moniage Guillaume* 1, where Guillaume's servant sings to him about his own exploits and marriage, as told in *La Prise d'Orange*. *Les Deux rédactions en vers du "Moniage Guillaume"*, ed. W. Cloëtta, Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1906, vol. 1, 446–50.
- 63 As does Dällenbach, *Récit*, pp. 76–138.
- 64 See A. Leupin, *Barbarolexis: Medieval Writing and Sexuality*, trans. K. M. Cooper, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989, pp. 17–38.
- 65 Speer, "Specularity," p. 238n16. On the prevalence of conflict, rather than homology, between the textual and social realms, see Kay, "*Chansons de geste*," pp. 17–18.
- 66 Cf. Nolan, *Now Through a Glass Darkly*, p. 278, who asserts an unduly general epochal totalization of "the coherence of relationship guaranteed to the medieval imagination by its appropriation of the Incarnation not merely as imaginable option, but as fact. The hypostatic union available in the physical, historical person of Christ was, for the Middle Ages, a final, unquestionable reconciliation

of the intellectually required sense of differentiation between the self and the Other as well as the desperately desired similarity between them" (p. 278). In the light of the findings in our study, this is an extremely reductive view of medieval specularity; it represents only one of a number of quite distinct perspectives on reflexivity, some of which would place into question or refute such an abusively generalized view of the Middle Ages.

- 67 R. Siegle, *The Politics of Reflexivity: Narrative and the Constitutive Poetics of Culture*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986: "reflexivity . . . is a basic capability of narrative exercised in every period" (p. 3); we should "extend the reflexive frame of reference to all narrative and . . . make the corresponding revisions in narrative poetics that such an extension would enable" (p. 8), Siegle argues that to limit ourselves to study of the inward reflexivity of the "esthetic" or "artistic" text is to truncate our perception of how reflexive properties also address the ideological sphere. Reflexivity extends to "the semiotic, philosophical, and ideological processes taking place in any narrative alongside those issues our existing poetics equips us to find" (p. 1).
- 68 The question of intergeneric complementarity between the *chansons de geste* and romance has recently been reopened in terms of their political and ideological implications, in Kay, "*Chansons de geste*"; see in particular her discussion of "specular" narrative in *Jourdain de Blaye* (pp. 87–88).

I THE SPECULAR ENCOUNTER IN FICTIONS OF RECIPROCITY: THE LAIS OF MARIE DE FRANCE

- 1 On the reception of the *Lais* since the Early Modern Period, see R. Baum, *Recherches sur les oeuvres attribuées à Marie de France*, pp. 59–116; and C. Maréchal's Introduction to *Quest*, pp. 1–27.
- 2 General prologue, 9–16. Citations are from *Les Lais de Marie de France*, ed. J. Rychner, Paris: Champion, 1966. On the capacity of the *Lais* to activate the reader's interpretive faculties, see R. Sturges, "Texts and Readers in Marie de France's *Lais*," *RR*, 71 (1980), 244–64, and K. Brightenback, "The *Metamorphoses* and Narrative *Conjointure* in *Deus Amanz*, *Yonec*, and *Le Laiistic*," *RR*, 72 (1981), p. 11.
- 3 See, for example, J. R. Rothschild, *Narrative Technique in the "Lais" of Marie de France: Themes and Variations*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974, who finds that themes recurrent in multiple *lais* are indicative of an "artistic unity for the ensemble" (p. 15). See also K. Holtermayr-Rosenfield, "Die *Lais* der Marie de France: ein poetisches Rätsel," *Sprachkunst*, 16 (1985), 98–112. In the most recent extended study of Marie's *Lais*, M. Mikhailova, *Le Présent de Marie*, Paris: Diderot, 1996, considers each of the twelve *lais* in the Harley manuscript as a specialized reflection of the twofold "projet poétique" set forth in the prologue, to collect ("assembler") the *lais* and to offer ("offrir") them as a gift to a king, hence the thematic importance of *jointure* and *don* she finds variously illustrated in each *lai*, pp. 52–53.

- 4 Although Baum, *Recherches*, pp. 117–92, doubts that the *lais* in the Harley manuscript are by Marie de France or any other single author, his position has been progressively weakened by many studies showing evidence of single authorship, indeed of Marie's authorship. On the issues involved, see the review by Jeanne Lods in *CCM*, 14 (1971), 355–58.
- 5 On the notion of "assemblage" as *recueil* and the prologues and epilogues in relation to the collection's coherence, see R. Pickens, "La Poétique de Marie de France d'après les Prologues des Lais," *LR*, 32 (1978), 378–84; Pickens, "History and Meaning in the *Lais* of Marie de France," in *Misrahi*, pp. 203–04; and M.-L. Ollier, "Les *Lais* de Marie de France, ou le recueil comme forme," in *La Nouvelle*, pp. 68–70; 78–79. See also D. Kelly: "The amalgam can refer to the collection of narrative material in a single manuscript: 'M'entremis des lais assembler, / Par rime faire e reconter'" (47–48) [I undertook to assemble the *lais*, to make rhyme and narrative]. *The Art of Medieval French Romance*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992, p. 99.
- 6 Recently, M. Bruckner has argued that the twelve *lais* in the Harley manuscript comprise a "kind of mini-cycle of *lais* unparalleled in vernacular writing of the twelfth century," in *Shaping Romance: Interpretation, Truth, and Closure in Twelfth-Century French Fictions*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, p. 157. See also G. Burgess, *The Lais of Marie de France: Text and Context*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987; J. H. McCash, "The Curse of the White Hind and the Cure of the Weasel: Animal Magic in the *Lais* of Marie de France," in *Aspects*, p. 199. On the *recueil* as a form of content, see Ollier, "Recueil," p. 72. We shall return to this issue later in the chapter.
- 7 On the extant manuscripts, see Baum, *Recherches*, pp. 45–58; Rychner, *Lais de Marie de France*, xix–xxviii.
- 8 A. Knapton, *Mythe et psychologie chez Marie de France dans 'Guigemar'*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975, mentions only the life of Saint Hubert in connection with the hind episode in *Guigemar*, pp. 57–58. But see M. Thiébaux on the related *vitae* of Hubert and Eustace: *The Stag of Love: The Chase in Medieval Literature*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974, p. 65. The hunting scene in *Guigemar* shows affinities with both lives.
- 9 Cf. R. Pickens, "Thematic Structure in Marie de France's *Guigemar*," *Rom*, 95 (1974), p. 331, though also McCash, "The Curse," p. 202. The term "peri" occurs in similar usage in the anonymous *Désiré*: "Un an enter e plus languï, / trestuz le tenent a peri. / Tuz diseient qu'il se moreit, / e il meïmes le diseit" (345–48) [He languished for a year and more; everyone thought his case to be hopeless. They said he was on the verge of dying, and even he said so]. *Les Lais anonymes des XIIe et XIIIe siècles*, ed. P. M. O. Tobin, Geneva: Droz, 1976.
- 10 Hence a recognition conditioned by immediate circumstances yet whose source is the unconscious. See T. Cave, *Recognitions: A Study in Poetics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, pp. 162–80. This is the moment at which the "unthought known" comes into consciousness. See C. Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, pp. 277–83.

- 11 Cf. A. Saly, "Observations sur le lai de *Guigemar*," in *Foulon*, vol. 1, p. 331; F. Dubost, "Les Motifs merveilleux dans les *Lais* de Marie de France," in *Amour*, p. 77; and R. Stein, "Desire, Social Reproduction, and Marie's *Guigemar*," in *Quest*, pp. 282–83.
- 12 Cf. Pickens, "Thematic Structure," 336.
- 13 Although the thigh wound – "En la quisse desk'al cheval" – echoed in *Chaitivel*, 123 – has elicited comparison with the Fisher King in Chrétien's *Conte du graal* (e.g., P. Jonin, "Merveilleux celtique et symbolisme universel dans *Guigemar* de Marie de France," *Mél. Wathelet*, pp. 242–43), the incident suggests not impotence, but a sexual deficit. See J.-C. Huchet, "Nom de femme et écriture féminine au Moyen Age: Les *Lais* de Marie de France," *Poétique*, 12 (1981), 411. Cf. Stein, "Desire," p. 283.
- 14 This rhetorical topic synthesizes much of the earlier part of the *lai*. Often in the *Lais*, amplification moves toward disclosure of the topical figure on which it is founded. This proves to be true of the collection as a whole, as we shall see in *Chievrefoil*.
- 15 An "hermaphrodite," according to Pickens, who suggests that it represents "sexual wholeness, the perfect union of a man and a woman" ("Thematic Structure," 335). Giraldus Cambrensis's *Itinerarium Kambriae* contains an anecdote about a hind with twelve-pointed antlers, the head and horns of which were given to Henry II. See U. Holmes, Jr., "A Welsh Motif in Marie's *Guigemar*," *SP*, 39 (1942), 11–14. See also E. Rosenn, "The Sexual and Textual Politics of Marie's Poetics," in *Quest*, pp. 231–32; S. Nichols, "Deflections of the Body in the Old French Lay," *SFR*, 14 (1990), 27–50; Pickens, "Marie de France and the Body Poetic," in *Gender*, pp. 135–71, and Pickens, "The Poetics of Androgyny in the *Lais* of Marie de France: *Yonec*, *Milun*, and the General *Prologue*," in *Aspects*, pp. 211–19, on "sexual ambiguity" in the *Lais*.
- 16 Hence a further affinity between this scene and its analogue in Flaubert's tale of Julian, both of which configure the parental imagoes at this juncture, though in the latter they are not conflated.
- 17 Hence, perhaps, the necessity for *Guigemar* to "s'arracher à une mère qui a merveille l'amot, et la 'tuer' symboliquement," in the words of Dubost ("Motifs merveilleux," p. 77).
- 18 Cf. Knapton, *Mythe et psychologie*, pp. 39–40; 50–55.
- 19 There is a certain oneiric quality about this expulsion. *Guigemar* responds without fear, brandishing a "grosse perche de sap" (595) – a clothes pole, though without inflicting harm with it; he as yet makes no such "phallic" assertion against a figure of paternal authority.
- 20 Cf. J. Koopmans and P. Verhuyck, "*Guigemar* et sa dame," *Neo*, 68 (1984), 9–21.
- 21 On this exchange, see Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, pp. 165–70, and J. Brumlik, "Thematic Irony in Marie de France's *Guigemar*," *FF*, 13 (1988), 5–16.
- 22 Some of these issues are raised by Brumlik, "Thematic Irony," 5–16; McCash, "The Curse," pp. 201, 204; and E. Mickel, "Antiquities in Marie's *Lais*," in *Quest*, p. 130.

- 23 On the predominance of imperfective “closure” in the *Lais*, see E. B. Vitz, “The *Lais* of Marie de France: ‘Narrative Grammar’ and the Literary Text,” in *Medieval Narrative and Modern Narratology* (New York: University Press, 1989), pp. 149–75. Although “Marie almost always presents us with a resolution that contains an *intrinsic deficiency*” (p. 167), “the kinds of closure that Marie’s *Lais* provide are often more esthetic or poetic than narrative” (p. 173, author’s emphasis); see also Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, p. 200.
- 24 Cf. Koopmans and Verhuyck, 17–19; Huchet, “Nom de femme,” 411; Stein, “Desire,” p. 293n11; Dubost, “Motifs merveilleux,” pp. 76–77.
- 25 From this perspective, the plot could be seen as emanating from “psychoanalytic recognition” effected by Guigemar’s encounter with the hind. Cf. Cave, *Recognitions*, pp. 162–76.
- 26 On a possibly male author, see Baum, *Recherches*, and Huchet, “Nom de femme,” 411–27.
- 27 Analysis of the poem exclusively in terms of the hero’s individuation would, from the point of view of some feminist theory, be viewed as biased in favor of a “masculist” or “androcentric” perspective. See E. Showalter, “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness,” in *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*, New York: Pantheon, 1985, pp. 243–70; and P. Schweickart, “Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading,” in *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts*, eds. E. Flynn and P. Schweickart, Baltimore Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986. Yet to attempt to compensate for this by offering a so-called “gyno-centric” reading centered on the “marginalized” figure of the *malmariée*, would also be lopsided, in view of the consistent emphasis in the *Lais* on *couples* in various relations of reciprocity.
- 28 On the numerous *malmariées* in the collection, see M. Bastide, “Les Malmariées des *lais* de Marie de France: Des Cris de la fée aux soupirs de la sainte,” *IL*, 47 (1995), 4–13. R. H. Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*, University of Chicago Press, 1991, pp. 166–78, sees the figure of the *malmariée* in the *Lais* as a reflection of the prevalence of feudal marriages by arrangement (p. 171). On this, see also J. Baldwin, *The Language of Sex: Five Voices from Northern France around 1200*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 75–76.
- 29 Other examples include the “Salle aux images” in the *Roman de Tristan* by Thomas; Lancelot’s autobiographical murals in the Prose *Lancelot* and the *Mort le roi Artu*; and the tomb of Elinas in the *Roman de Mélusine* by Jean d’Arras.
- 30 On Ovidian elements in *Guigemar*, see R. Hanning, “Courtly Contexts for Urban *cultus*: Responses to Ovid in Chrétien’s *Cligés* and Marie’s *Guigemar*,” *Symposium*, 35 (1981), 34–56, who shows that, unlike Ovid, Marie depicts love’s progress as a natural phenomenon, rather than as an artful contrivance. See also L. Whalen, “A Medieval Book Burning: *Objet d’art* as Narrative Device in the *Lai* of *Guigemar*,” *Neo*, 80 (1996): 205–11.
- 31 Whalen calls the mural “a painting that narrates a message of liberation” (“*Objet d’art*,” 209).

- 32 Whereas the narrator “tells” us that Guigemar immediately recognized the import of the hind’s message (129–32), we are “shown” more indirectly how the lady has understood the significance of the mural; this emerges from her lucid self-evaluation revealing that she is acutely aware of her desperate situation (339–48).
- 33 For M. Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: the ‘Viaticum’ and its Commentaries*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990, p. 63, the lovers’ symptoms in *Guigemar*, 393–436, reflect the new, twelfth-century interest in the signs of erotic passion. See also M. Ciavolella, *La “malattia d’amore” dall’Antichità al Medioevo*, Rome: Bulzoni, 1976, p. 110, and M. Stanesco, “Du Démon de midi à l’Eros mélancolique,” *Poétique*, 106 (1996), 131–59 (on *Guigemar*, 143–45). On love as *passio* in *Guigemar*, see E. Mickel, “A Reconsideration of the *Lais* of Marie de France,” *Speculum*, 46 (1971), 39–65.
- 34 See the important study by R. Dubuis, “La notion de *druërie* dans les *Lais* de Marie de France,” *MAGE*, 98 (1992), 391–413. Examining occurrences of *dru*, *drue*, and *druërie* in the *Lais*, Dubuis demonstrates that Marie’s usage of these terms consistently designates reciprocal love: the word *dru* “s’applique, certes, à une personne, celui ou celle qui aime, d’un amour profond, total; mais il signifie aussi l’existence d’un amour réciproque . . . Le *dru* et la *drue* forment un couple comme l’avère et le revers font une médaille: l’un ne peut se concevoir sans l’autre” (396). “La *druërie* n’est pas l’équivalent de l’*amur*, mais d’une forme nouvelle de ce sentiment, l’*entreamur*” (397).
- 35 Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, pp. 167–70, emphasizes the decisive role of the lady’s autobiographical narration in effecting this recognition; “the separate strands of their histories” are “repeatedly entwined in the *lai*” (p. 169). On these objects as amatory and poetic metaphors, see N. V. Durling, “The Knot, the Belt, and the Making of *Guigemar*,” *Assays*, 6 (1991), 29–53.
- 36 Cf. Dubuis, “La notion de *druërie*,” 395: “L’amour qui unit la dame et Guigemar crée entre eux des liens d’appartenance *réciproque* dont elle n’envisage pas un instant qu’ils puissent être contestés. Puisque Guigemar a retrouvé sa dame, puisque le *dru* a retrouvé sa *drue*, il n’est pas concevable, à leurs yeux, qu’ils puissent désormais vivre l’un sans l’autre” (my emphasis).
- 37 See J. H. McCash, “Mutual Love as a Medieval Ideal,” in *Courthy*, pp. 429–38: “. . . in the *Lais* of Marie de France . . . reciprocity is the quintessence of true love, a fact that she makes abundantly clear to anyone who reads her *Lais* as a group” (p. 435). This aspect of the tales themselves carries over into Marie’s dedication of her collection to the monarch evoked in the prologue: “Marie conceives the gift of her *Lais* as a reciprocal give and take.” See also S. Nichols, “Marie de France’s Commonplaces,” in *Contexts*, p. 145.
- 38 Cf. M. Freeman, “Marie de France’s Poetics of Silence: The Implications for a Feminine *Translatio*,” *PMLA*, 99 (1984), p. 868.
- 39 Although Freeman (*ibid.*, 865) characterizes Marie’s “poetics of silence” as the “practice of not describing the private confrontation between two different worlds that gives rise to the object that symbolizes it,” this contentious scene between husband and wife is precisely the private confrontation that

- produces the symbolic *laiüstic*. On depictions of private life in the *Lais*, see J. Bowers, "Ordeals, Privacy, and the *Lais* of Marie de France," *JMRS*, 24 (1994), 30–31.
- 40 Sturges places the nightingale among "numerous other examples of the sign or text interpretable by the lover but preventing interpretation by the world outside the relationship." "Texts and Readers," 254. See also R. Green, "Marie de France's *Laiüstic*: Love's Victory through Symbolic Expression," *RN*, 16 (1974–75), 695–99.
- 41 Note the elegiac, dysphoric nature of the reciprocity in this instance. Cf. E. Mickel, *Marie de France*, New York: Twayne, 1974; and, on the couple's transcendence of their loss through interiorization, see E. Siénart, *Les "Lais" de Marie de France: Du Conte merveilleux à la nouvelle psychologique*, Paris: Champion, 1978, p. 136.
- 42 On this *lai* and the Tristan legend, see R. Brusegan, "Le Cutel et le bastun: Mort et vie de Tristan dans le *Chèvrefeuille* de Marie de France," in *Buschinger*, pp. 53–55; and A. Adams and T. Hemming, "*Chèvrefeuille* and the Evolution of the Tristan Legend," *BBSIA*, 28 (1976), 204–13.
- 43 This detail anticipates a specular encounter featuring rustics as informants in the Prose *Tristan*. See *Le Roman de Tristan en Prose*, 1. *Des aventures de Lancelot à la fin de la "Folie Tristan"*, ed. P. Ménard, Geneva: Droz, 1987, pp. 271–72.
- 44 See R. Lejeune, "Le Message d'amour de Tristan à Iseut (encore un retour au *Lai du Chèvrefeuille* de Marie de France)," in *Foulon*, vol. 1, pp. 187–94; and R. Dubuis, "Plaidoyer pour une lecture globale du lai du *Chèvrefeuille*," *MAGE*, 87 (1981), 341–71.
- 45 For various critical positions, see Burgess, *Lais of Marie de France*, pp. 65–70; and K. Busby, "'Ceo fu la summe de l'escrit' (*Chèvrefeuille*, line 61) Again," *PQ*, 74 (1995), 1–15.
- 46 Cf. Freeman, "Poetics of Silence," pp. 871–73. Did Marie foresee one univocally "correct" interpretation? Something akin to exegesis? See L. Spitzer, "The Prologue to the *Lais* of Marie de France and Medieval Poetics," *MP*, 41 (1943–44), 96–102, and A. Foulet and K. Uitti, "The Prologue to the *Lais* of Marie de France: A Reconsideration," *RPh*, 35 (1981), 242–49. Or were later readers to find *new* significance in these texts, in keeping with a tendency apparent in twelfth-century humanism? See T. Hunt, "Glossing Marie de France," *RF*, 86 (1974), 396–418, and K. Brightenback, "Remarks on the Prologue to Marie de France's *Lais*," *RPh*, 30 (1976–77), 168–77. On the other hand, some modern critical "glosses" of *Chievrefeuille* would seem to envisage little more than mere reconstitution of the prosaic circumstantiality implicit in these richly poetic passages.
- 47 See E. Baumgartner, "Lyrisme et roman: Du *Lai de Guirun* au *Lai du Chèvrefeuille*," in *Mél. Bec*, pp. 81–82; and D. Berkvam, "La vérité déplacée dans le *Chèvrefeuille*," *Neo*, 73 (1989), 14–22.
- 48 Cf. Dubuis, "La notion de *druerie*," p. 395, and Brusegan: "La réciprocité amoureuse niée au début du *Chèvrefeuille* . . . est rétablie à la fin du lai sur le plan poétique" ("Le Cutel et le bastun," p. 543).

- 49 Cf. P. McCracken, "Women and Medicine in Medieval French Narrative," *Exemplaria*, 5 (1993), 239–61.
- 50 On "mesure" here, see E. Hoepffner, *Les Lais de Marie de France*, Paris: Boivin, 1935, p. 133; Burgess, *Lais of Marie de France*, pp. 42–49; J. Wathelet-Willem, "Un lai de Marie de France: les *Deus Amanz*," in *Lejeune*, pp. 1143–57; Siénart, *Les "Lais" de Marie de France*, pp. 117–19. R. Kieckhefer calls this incident an instance of "the subordination of magic to psychology" in which "the plot hinges on the non-use of a magical object." *Magic in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 109.
- 51 See J. Larmat, "La Chasse dans les *Lais* de Marie de France," in *La Chasse*, pp. 377–84.
- 52 A critical tendency in recent years has been to locate figures of Marie the "creative" poet in her fictions. See, for example, Freeman, "Poetics of Silence," p. 878, and Pickens, "Body Poetic," p. 158. One might thus expect that Marie would mirror herself as author in the function of "counsel," which features significant and highly consequential *inventions*. Yet among the *lais* in this subset, women offer counsel concerning only strategies of deceit, while the positive counselors are the king's advisor in *Bisclavret* and the wounded lover in *Chaitivel*, both males. Has the supposed "reflexivity" between Marie the poet and her fiction been overemphasized? On the diversity of female roles, see J. H. McCash, "Images of Women in the *Lais* of Marie de France," *MedP*, 11 (1996), 96–112.
- 53 In Marie's fable "Del vilein e de la serpent," we find a comment on the harmful counsel of foolish women that recalls *Equitan*: "De plusurs femmes est sceü, / Que si conseillent lur seigneur / Ke lur revert(e) a deshonor; / Meinte femme conseilhe a feire / Ceo dunt a plusurs nest cuntreire. / Sages hum ne deit pas entendre / Ne a fole femme conseil prendre . . ." (106–12) [Of numerous women it is known that their advice brings dishonor to their men. Many a woman advises conduct harmful to others. A discerning man should not take advice from a foolish woman . . .]. Marie de France, *Fables*, eds. A. Ewert and R. C. Johnston, Oxford: Blackwell, 1966, p. 48.
- 54 On aspects of the fabliau in *Equitan*, see Hoepffner, *Lais*, p. 151; J. Frappier, "Remarques sur la structure du lai, essai de définition et de classement," in *La Litt.*, p. 33; J. Wathelet-Willem, "*Equitan* dans l'oeuvre de Marie de France," *MAGE*, 69 (1963), 325; and R. Pickens, "*Equitan*, Anti-Guigemar," *RN*, 15 (1973), 361–67.
- 55 Cf. J.-L. Picherit, "Le Châtiment des amants dans le lai d'*Equitan* de Marie de France," *MAGE*, 102 (1996), 419–24; "L'hommage et la foi que les deux hommes ont dû se jurer les lient et leur impose des devoirs réciproques que le roi ne manque d'ailleurs pas d'évoquer au cours du dilemme qui l'assaille pendant la nuit [72–74]" (420).
- 56 Mikhailova calls this denouement a "jointure à l'envers" (*Présent*, pp. 155–56), the "tone" of the fabliau being minimized by a "tragic" denouement, pp. 177–78. On boiling as punishment, see Bowers, "Ordeals," 16–20; and Picherit, "Le Châtiment des amants dans le lai d'*Equitan* de Marie de France," *MAGE*, 102 (1996), pp. 421–24.

- 57 See M. T. Bruckner, "Of Men and Beasts in *Bisclavret*," *RR*, 82 (1991), 251–69. On the metamorphoses of *bisclavret* and congeners, see L. Harf-Lancner, "La Métamorphose illusoire: Des théories chrétiennes de la métamorphose aux images médiévales du loup-garou," *Annales ESC*, 40 (1985), 208–26.
- 58 Cf. M. Freeman, "Dual Natures and Subverted Glosses: Marie de France's *Bisclavret*," *RN*, 35 (1985), 288–301; the analyses of the king's counselor are "hypotheses-cum-suggestions" (298).
- 59 Cf. K. Holten, "Metamorphosis and Language in the Lay of *Bisclavret*," in *Quest*, pp. 193–211. "In honorable reciprocity, the king grants him the formal protection of sovereignty. . . and they enjoy a mutually rewarding relationship based on the pre-existing oath" (p. 202).
- 60 She considers all four of them her "druz" (109). In view of Marie's specialized usage of *druerie* to designate a relation of reciprocity, this detail is highly ironic. Cf. Dubuis, "La notion de *druerie*," 394.
- 61 See E. W. Poe, "The Problem of the Tournament in *Chaitivel*," in *Quest*, pp. 175–92; Bowers, "Ordeals," 14–15; and S. Cowling, "The Image of the Tournament in Marie de France's *Le Chaitivel*," *RN*, 16 (1975), 686–91.
- 62 Baum, *Recherches*, p. 177, Mickel, "Reconsideration," 58, and K. Gingrass-Conley, "La 'venue' à l'écriture de la dame dans *Le Chaitivel*," *RR*, 83 (1992), 157, discuss this scene as a debate similar to those in the *De Amore* of Andreas Capellanus. See also Hoepffner, *Lais*, p. 161.
- 63 Hoepffner, *Lais*, p. 165, sees her portrayal as an indictment of the remote, insensitive lady of Provençal lyric. Cf. F. Mora-Lebrun, "Marie de France héritière de la lyrique des troubadours: L'Exemple du *Chaitivel*," *TLL*, 24 (1986), 19–30. See also E. Mickel, "Marie de France's Use of Irony as a Stylistic Device," *CN*, 33 (1973), 38; 52–53; and H. Arden, "The *Lais* of Marie de France and Carol Gilligan's Theory of the Psychology of Women," in *Quest*, p. 219. On her discovery of a capacity to listen and thus to write, see Gingrass-Conley, "'Venue'," 155–60.
- 64 Cf. Pickens, "Body Poetic," pp. 143–44; and Gingrass-Conley, "'Venue,'" 158.
- 65 L. Harf-Lancner, *Les Fées au Moyen Age: Morgane et Mélusine; La Naissance des fées*, Paris: Champion, 1984, pp. 250–54, cites three "narrative sequences" in *Lanval* that are also found in "contes mélusiniens": the encounter with the fairy; the "pact" between fairy and lover; the transgression of the taboo and its consequences. However, the fairy's return and the hero's departure for Avalon contrast with Melusinian narratives and are more reminiscent of "contes morganienais irlandais" (p. 250).
- 66 Cf. R. H. Bloch, "The Lay and the Law: Sexual/Textual Transgression in *La Chastelaine de Vergi*, the *Lai d'Ignaure*, and the *Lais* of Marie de France," *SFR*, 14 (1990), 201: "The fairy lady is the literary incarnation of a fantasized solution to the material problems of the class of unmarried, unendowed, and wandering 'jeunes.'"
 - 67 On feudal *largesse* and this *lai*, see Mikhailova, *Présent*, pp. 267–75; J. Flori, "Aristocratie et valeurs 'chevaleresques' dans la seconde moitié du xii^e siècle: L'Exemple des *lais* de Marie de France," *MAge*, 96 (1990), pp. 58–63.

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- 68 Cf. Harf-Lancner, *Fées au Moyen Age*, p. 253; C. Lecouteux, "La Structure des légendes mélusiniennes," *Annales ESC*, 33 (1978), 294–306.
- 69 On this detail, see Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 131; p. 245n25.
- 70 See E. A. Francis, "The Trial in *Lanval*," in *Pope*, pp. 405–11; Bowers, "Ordeals," 21; and J. R. Rothschild, "A Rapprochement Between *Bisclavret* and *Lanval*," *Speculum*, 48 (1973), 78–88, on "felonie" (439).
- 71 "The legal drama represents the dark side of the jury trial under direct royal supervision": Bowers, "Ordeals," 21.
- 72 On this outcome and juridical practices at the court of Henry II, see D. A. Monson, "L'Idéologie du *lai* de *Lanval*," *MAge*, 93 (1987), 349–72.
- 73 On the tensions in twelfth-century society between ordeal and inquest, see R. H. Bloch, *Medieval French Literature and Law*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977, pp. 13–62, 108–214.
- 74 "Like nearly everything else in the *lai*, the magical acquittal represents a utopian dream of wish-fulfillment utterly at odds with the harsh realities of late feudal justice": Bowers, "Ordeals," p. 21.
- 75 On related aspects of paternal figures in literature, see the essays in *Father*.
- 76 The pattern occurs in Marie's *Milun*; the anonymous *lais* of *Tydorel* and *Doom*; *Le Bel Inconnu*; and the Prose *Lancelot*.
- 77 See J. H. McCash, "The Hawk-Lover in Marie de France's *Yonec*," *MedP*, 6 (1991), 67–75. On the figure's Celtic background, see T. P. Cross, "The Celtic Origin of the Lay of *Yonec*," *RC*, 31 (1910), 413–71; and R. N. Illingworth, "Celtic Tradition and the *lai* of *Yonec*," *EC*, 9 (1960–61), 501–20. On oriental and classical elements, see M. B. Ogle, "Some Theories of Irish Literary Influence and the Lay of *Yonec*," *RR*, 10 (1919), 123–48.
- 78 See also M. Freeman, "The Changing Figure of the Male: The Revenge of the Female Storyteller," in *Quest*, pp. 243–61.
- 79 On this father as prophet, see Pickens, "Poetics of Androgyny," p. 213; on overtones of the Annunciation, see Freeman, "Changing Figure," p. 250; Pickens, "Body Poetic," 148.
- 80 Freeman, "Changing Figure," p. 257, notes that this reunion recalls their initial union after taking the sacraments: "Unke si bel cuple ne vi!" (192). Ultimately, the son's vengeance is accessory to the final emphasis on the couple, and the epilogue does not mention him but instead emphasizes the couple's story "de la dolor / Que cil suffrirent pur amur" (557–58) [of the agony they suffered for love].
- 81 See also D. Faust, "Women Narrators in the *Lais* of Marie de France," in *Women*, pp. 21–23, and Pickens, "Body Poetic," 150.
- 82 See also J. H. McCash, "The Swan and the Nightingale: Natural Unity in a Hostile World in the *Lais* of Marie de France," *FS*, 49 (1995), 391–93, and M.-N. Toury, "Le Bestiaire de Marie de France dans les *Lais*," *op. cit.*, 5 (1995), 15–18.
- 83 Collaborative affabulation by major characters, so that large segments of the *lai* are reconstituted in miniature, is an important characteristic of Marie's art. Used sparingly in *Guigemar*, it assumes much greater importance in *Yonec*, *Milun*, and *Eliduc*.

- 84 For Sturges, the swan is among the “symbols interpretable only by the lovers themselves.” “Texts and Readers,” 259. As emblems of a consciousness shared only by the couple, they are especially appropriate as accessories to the theme of reciprocity.
- 85 These three *lais* are suggestive of Freudian “family romance,” whereby the narrative discloses descent from exalted or otherwise remarkable progenitors. See D. Maddox, “Specular Stories, Family Romance, and the Fictions of Courtly Culture,” *Exemplaria*, 3 (1991), 299–326; and S. Kay, “Motherhood: the Case of the Epic Family Romance,” in *Shifts*, pp. 23–36.
- 86 See also J. Wathelet-Willem, “L’Enfant dans les *Lais* de Marie de France,” in *L’Enfant*, pp. 301–12; and D. Berkvam, *Enfance et maternité dans la littérature française du XII^e et XIII^e siècles*, Paris: Champion, 1981, pp. 22–128.
- 87 Motif T.587.1 “Birth of Twins Indication of Unfaithfulness in Wife” (Stith Thompson). See E. Kooper, “Multiple Births and Multiple Disaster: Twins in Medieval Literature,” in *Conjunctures*, pp. 253–69. Cf. Baldwin, *Language*, pp. 219–20.
- 88 See A. A. Chapman, “Nom du père / nom d’auteur: Les Origines énigmatiques du *Fresne*,” *PG*, 10 (1992), 21–37.
- 89 See J. Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: the Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance*, New York: Vintage, 1990, pp. 368–70.
- 90 On the *pail roé* as a vehicle of identity, see D. Berkvam, “La Chose et le signe dans *Le Fresne*,” in *L’Imaginaire*, pp. 235–44.
- 91 On concubinage, see C. Martineau-Génieys, “La Merveille du Frêne,” in *Dufournet*, vol. II, pp. 925–39; and G. Duby, *Le Chevalier, la femme, le prêtre*, Paris: Hachette, 1981, p. 49.
- 92 See P. Ainsworth, “‘The Letter Killeth’: Law and Spirit in Marie de France’s Lay of *Le Fresne*,” *FS*, 50 (1996), 1–14; and P. Rockwell, “Twin Mysteries: Ceci n’est pas un *Fresne*, Rewriting Resemblance in *Galeran de Bretagne*” in *Conjunctures*, pp. 489–90.
- 93 Cf. L. De Looze, “Marie de France et la textualisation: Arbre, enfant, oeuvre dans le lai de *Fresne*,” *RR*, 82 (1990), 396–408; and Berkvam, “La Chose et le signe.”
- 94 On multiple births in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, see G. Spiegel, “Maternity and Monstrosity: Reproductive Biology in the *Roman de Mélusine*,” in *Melusine*, 100–124.
- 95 See also Berkvam, “La Chose et le signe,” p. 239; and Ainsworth, “‘The Letter’,” p. 9.
- 96 On these, see G. Angeli, *Maria di Francia, “Lais”*, Parma: Pratiche, 1992, p. 402.
- 97 On *cunseil* (*consilium*), see S. B. North, “The Role of Advice in Marie de France’s *Eliduc*,” in *Woledge*, pp. 111–13.
- 98 “L’indécision est la constante du caractère d’*Eliduc*.” Siénart, *Les “Lais”*, p. 166; see also North, “Role of Advice,” pp. 116–33; and M. Glasser, “Les ‘Actions raisonnées’ opposées aux ‘actions impulsives’ dans *Eliduc*,” *VR*, 42 (1983), 136–43.

- 99 Hence Marie's affirmation that the authentic title of this tale is *Guildeluëc ha Guilliadun* (22). See M. T. Bruckner, "Strategies of Naming in Marie de France's *Lais*: At the Crossroads of Gender and Genre," *Neo*, 75 (1991), 31–40; McCash, "The Curse," pp. 208–09; D. Kelly, "Titles, Openings, and Adventures in Marie de France's *Lays*," in *Spiewok*, pp. 231–39.
- 100 B. Fitz, "The Storm Episode and the Weasel Episode: Sacrificial Casuistry in Marie de France's *Eliduc*," *MLN*, 89 (1974), 542–49; cf., however, North, "Role of Advice," pp. 126–27.
- 101 See McCash, "The Curse," pp. 205–9; McCracken, "Women and Medicine," pp. 256–60; Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, p. 175.
- 102 See, in the semiliturgical *Sponsus*, the lamentations of the Foolish Virgins: "Dolentas! chaitivas! trop i avem dormit." *Théâtre français au Moyen Age publié d'après les manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du Roi*, eds., L. Monmerqué and F. Michel, Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1874, pp. 3–9.
- 103 See M. de Riquer, "La aventure, el lai y el conte en María de Francia," *FRom*, 2 (1955), 1–19.
- 104 See O. Jodogne, "La 'conversion' dans le lai d'*Eliduc*," in *Jonin*, pp. 349–54; Mikhailova, *Présent*, p. 251; D. Nelson, "Eliduc's Salvation," *FR*, 55 (1981–82), 37–42; and J. Ribard, "Le Lai d'*Eliduc*: Etude thématique," in *Foulon*, vol. 1, pp. 295–99.
- 105 This point has been made by McCash, "The Curse," p. 209; Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, pp. 176–77; and Ainsworth, "'The Letter'," pp. 10–11. See also S. Coolidge, "Eliduc and the Iconography of Love," *MS*, 54 (1992), 274–85.
- 106 D. Maddox, "Triadic Structure in the *Lais* of Marie de France," *Assays*, 3 (1985), 19–40. Portions of this section of the chapter are based on that article.
- 107 A. J. Greimas and J. Courtés, "The Cognitive Dimension of Narrative Discourse," *NLH*, 7 (1976), 433–47. On the structure of exchange apparent in narratives of this type, see Greimas, "Un problème de sémiotique narrative: les objets de valeur." *Du Sens II: Essais sémiotiques*, Paris: Seuil, 1983, pp. 32–39.
- 108 See S. Thompson on the "Trickster Cycle" in *The Folktale*, New York: Dryden, 1946, pp. 319–28. It has been demonstrated that *The Arabian Nights* features a dyadic organizational system "which because it cannot build a third term is invariably committed to radical change but not to growth." See F. J. Ghazoul, *The Arabian Nights: A Structural Analysis*, Cairo: Cairo Association for the Study and Presentation of Arab Cultural Values, 1980, p. 49.
- 109 Ghazoul, *Arabian Nights*, p. 147, contrasts the unmediated "binary structure" of the *Arabian Nights*, and the mediation of binary structures in mythical narratives. While unmediated binarism produces potentially endless narrative, mediation of the binary opposition enables conclusive resolution. As we shall see, the third subject in the *lai* as Marie develops it is not typically a mediator of the other two subjects in the triad but is rather oppositional with regard to both. Conclusive mediation of two reciprocally related subjects is normally accomplished symbolically, and not by the third subject in the ultimate triad.
- 110 On the concept of "actor," see A. J. Greimas, "Les Actants, les acteurs, et les figures," in *Du Sens II*, 49–66.

- 111 See, for example, L. Lawson, “La Structure du récit dans les *Lais* de Marie de France,” in *CandP*, pp. 233–40.
- 112 On the analysis of intersubjective relations in narrative, see D. Maddox, “L’Intersubjectivité et l’analyse du récit médiéval,” in *Mittelalter*, pp. 303–13.
- 113 This was quite apparent from my comparison, as yet unpublished, of Marie’s *lais* and a control corpus made up of the Old French anonymous *lais* and a number of other medieval brief narratives.
- 114 D. Kelly, “‘Diversement cumencier’ in the *Lais* of Marie de France,” in *Quest*, p. 146.
- 115 On circumstantial *topoi* and their place in the formulation of an argument, see R. Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 66–70.
- 116 Copeland, *Rhetoric*, p. 66.
- 117 D. Maddox, “Medieval Textualities and Intergeneric Form,” *ECr*, 33 (1993), 40–50.
- 118 See J. Burke, *Structures from the Trivium in the “Cantar de Mio Cid”*, University of Toronto Press, 1991.
- 119 On bipartition in *Guigemar*, see Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, p. 165.
- 120 This nonclassical sense of “comic” is not unfamiliar in medieval contexts, the most well known being Dante’s *Commedia*.
- 121 Pickens, “*Equitan*,” 367; and J. H. McCash, “Amor in Marie de France’s *Equitan* and *Fresne*: the Failure of the Courtly Ideal,” in *Court*, pp. 179–88.
- 122 On parody of the Credo and the Annunciation in *Yonec*, see Freeman, “Changing Figure,” p. 250. See also F. Dubost, “Yonec le vengeur et Tydorel le veilleur,” in *Dufournet*, vol. 1,” pp. 449–58; and Pickens, “Body Poetic,” p. 148.
- 123 Memory and forgetting are evoked in numerous passages (*Equitan*, 5–10; *Bisclavret*, 1–2; 315–18; *Le Chaitivel*, 1–2; 201–204; *Chievrefoil*, 107–13; *Eliduc*, 1181–84, as well as in the general prologue, 33–40). Although the *Lais* appear before the earliest medieval arts of memory, during the thirteenth century – see M. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: a Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 144 – Marie’s statements are indicative of an abiding concern with establishing a written record of these elements of Breton oral culture. See S. Nichols, “Working Late: Marie de France and the Value of Poetry,” in *Women*, pp. 7–16.
- 124 The principle of reciprocity expressed in Tristan’s utterance, whereby “not x without y, nor y without x,” rests on the kind of propositional syntax familiar to readers of Boethius’s treatise on inventing and judging arguments in dialectic. See E. Stump, *Boethius’s “De topicis differentiis”*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978. In that utterance, the propositional logic, which is akin to the topic *from antecedents and consequents* – “once the antecedent has been asserted, the consequent follows; once the consequent is taken away, the antecedent is taken away” (p. 68) – is invested with the circumstantiality of a rhetorical topic; “rhetorical topics are suited for hypotheses only, that is, they are arrogated to

- questions informed by circumstances,” whereas dialectical topics are independent of circumstances (p. 4). Tristan’s affirmation of reciprocity can thus be seen as a conditional or hypothetical proposition (pp. 30–34) that is variously illustrated by the specific case developed in each *lai*. On Boethius’s conceptualization of topics and medieval literature, see also E. Vance, *From Topic to Tale: Logic and Narrativity in the Middle Ages*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, pp. 41–79, and Burke, *Trivium*, pp. 80–100.
- 125 Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, pp. 176–77; McCash, “The Curse,” p. 209.
- 126 A. Leupin, “The Impossible Task of Manifesting ‘Literature’: On Marie de France’s Obscurity,” *Exemplaria*, 3 (1991), 221–42. “As Pope Alexander III (1159–10) reaffirmed, marriages were indissoluble from the moment of the exchange of vows, and only the sovereign pontiff had the right to annul them and authorize remarriage” (235).
- 127 On the issues involved, see Kelly, *Art*, pp. 110–114; Hunt, “Glossing,” 396–418; E. Mickel, “The Unity and Significance of Marie’s ‘Prologue,’” *Rom*, 96 (1975), 83–91; Foulet and Uitti, “The Prologue”; J.-C. Delclos, “Encore le prologue de Marie de France,” *MAge*, 90 (1984), 223–32; J. Rider, “Conclusion: Whence? Whither?,” *Exemplaria*, 3 (1991), pp. 261–64.
- 128 Cf. Kelly, *Art*, p. 111.
- 129 Thus in writing her *lais* she “construes” Ovid [see Brightenback, “The *Metamorphoses*”]; as well as the *Roman de Brut* and the *Roman d’Enéas* [see M. Pelan, *L’Influence du “Brut” de Wace sur les romanciers français de son temps*, Paris: Droz, 1931, pp. 104–24; and E. J. Richards, “Les Rapports entre le *Lai de Guigemar* et le *Roman d’Enéas*: Considérations génériques,” in *Le Récit*, pp. 45–56]; and she also “construes” the oral *lais* she has heard recounted.
- 130 There is no indication, however, that the “surplus” that might thus be construed amounts to a univocal signifying ground, a specific global meaning, or an “exegetical” coherence, either for a given *lai* or for the collection as a whole. Although the *Lais* clearly attest to the concerns of a moralist as well as to those of a stylist, the deft touch of the moralist works primarily through subtle connotations, but not in service to the kind of exegetical theory that some have perceived *en filigrane* in her prologue, e.g., Spitzer, “Prologue.” See instead Hunt, “Glossing,” on how her conceptualization of the legacy of writing resonates with twelfth-century humanist thought.
- 131 See also Leupin, “Impossible Task,” 241; and Freeman, “Poetics of Silence,” 861, 865.
- 132 Cf. Sturges, “Texts and Readers,” 263–64.
- 133 Cf. Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, pp. 184–89.
- 134 Cf. Sturges, “Texts and Readers,” 264: “The reason for placing interpretable signs and texts as mediators – both barriers and bridges – between lovers is the same as the reason for creating interpretable texts to stand between an author and a reader: people cannot apprehend one another directly, cannot read one another’s minds, but need . . . interpretable signs . . . and . . . stories . . . The *Lais* both represent for their characters and present to their readers a condition

of life: the independent consciousness confronting all that is not itself, and trying to make sense of it."

- 135 Cf. Mikhailova: "La déchirure fait ainsi place à l'intégrité de deux mondes différents, la cassure est remplacée par la différence . . . Effectuer une jointure là où il y avait déchirure n'est donc pas, pour Marie, effectuer une fusion où les deux parties perdent leur identité, où l'intégrité se fait au prix de l'effacement des différences" (*Présent*, pp. 62–63).
- 136 Cf. Greimas, "Les Objets de valeur," on "la Communication participative," *Du Sens*, pp. 44–46.

2 THE SPECULAR ENCOUNTER IN ARTHURIAN ROMANCE

- 1 For a survey of this motif's occurrences, see my "The Awakening: A Key Motif in Chrétien's Romances," in *Sower*, pp. 31–51.
- 2 Hence the schema's dual functionality here, combining – as in certain of Marie's *lais* – a negative assessment of the past with a type of prescriptive "counsel."
- 3 On levels of irony in *Cligés*, see P. Haidu, *Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien de Troyes: Irony and Comedy in 'Cligés' and 'Perceval'*, Geneva: Droz, 1968, and "Au début du roman, l'ironie," *Poétique*, 36 (1978), 443–66.
- 4 *Erec et Enide*, ed. M. Roques, Paris: Champion, 1952.
- 5 *Cligés*, ed. A. Micha, Paris: Champion, 1957.
- 6 For discussion of the significance of the midpoint in this work and others, see M. Freeman, *The Poetics of Translatio Studii and Conjointure: Chrétien de Troyes's 'Cligés'*, Lexington, Ky.: French Forum, 1979, pp. 91–127, though it is the dream, not the potion that induced it, that centers the symmetry of the work and welds Chrétien's textuality of crisis.
- 7 Erec's relinquishment of chivalrous activities prompts the onset of his crisis; Yvain's is occasioned, conversely, by excessive chivalric *deduit*. On the comparable properties in the two works, see R. G. Cook, "The Structure of Romance in Chrétien's *Erec* and *Yvain*," *MP*, 71 (1973–74), 128–43.
- 8 *Le Chevalier au lion (Yvain)*, ed. M. Roques, Paris: Champion, 1960.
- 9 On this episode, see J. Le Goff and P. Vidal-Naquet, "Lévi-Strauss en Brocéliande," *Critique*, 235 (1974), 541–71; P. Haidu, "The Hermit's Pottage: Deconstruction and History in *Yvain*," in *Sower*, pp. 127–45; E. Vance, "Chrétien's *Yvain* and the Ideologies of Change and Exchange," *YFS*, 70 (1986), 42–62; and A. H. Hawkins, "Yvain's Madness," *PQ*, 71 (1992), 377–97.
- 10 See J. Laidlaw, "Shame Appeased: on the Structure and the *Sen* of the *Chevalier au lion*," in *Topsfield*, pp. 195–219.
- 11 As in *Bisclavret*, a vestimentary motif marks the threshold of return to humanity from a quasi-feral state.
- 12 Cf. M. T. Bruckner, *Shaping Romance: Interpretation, Truth, and Closure in Twelfth-Century French Fictions*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, p. 81.
- 13 Cf. D. Hult, "Lancelot's Shame," *RPh*, 42 (1988), 30–50; E. Mickel, "The Theme of Honor in Chrétien's *Lancelot*," *ZfrP*, 91 (1975), 243–72.

- 14 *Le Chevalier de la charrete*, ed. M. Roques, Paris: Champion, 1958.
- 15 Lancelot is frequently specularized: by the dwarf driving the infamous *charrete* (356 ff.) and by a damsel who stages a scene of sexual violence in order to motivate him to defend her (1070 ff.); in brief formal descriptions of the customs of Logres and Gorre (1302 ff.; 2094 ff.); by the prophecy inscribed on the lid of the tomb (1900 ff.); by the description of the adventure of the Sword Bridge (647 ff.); and by the proclamation of the Tournament of Noauz (5433 ff.). Most are prospective, potential stories that invite Lancelot to invest them with his own exploits.
- 16 This episode will be taken up in greater detail in the next chapter.
- 17 See D. Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: Once and Future Fictions*. Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 82–100.
- 18 *Le Roman de Perceval ou le conte du graal*, ed. W. Roach, Geneva: Droz, 1959, (407–88).
- 19 On the evidence of widespread social disruption in the *Conte du graal*, see S. Sturm-Maddox, “‘Tenir sa terre en pais’: Social Order in the *Brut* and in the *Conte del graal*,” *SP*, 81 (1984), 28–41.
- 20 His awakenings are frequently depicted: alone in the forest (636); at a hostel with Gornemant, his tutor (1596); with Blanchefleur (1971, 2070, 2620), and after a snowfall (4161).
- 21 See Grace Armstrong, “The Scene of the Blood Drops on the Snow: A Crucial Narrative Moment in the *Conte du graal*,” *KRQ*, 19 (1972), 127–47; and D. Poirion, “Du Sang sur la neige: Nature et fonction de l’image dans le *Conte du graal*,” in *Voices*, pp. 143–65.
- 22 Depending on manuscript, the Fisher King may be Perceval’s maternal uncle or his cousin; see G. D. West, “Grail Problems, 11: the Grail Family in the Old French Verse Romances,” *RPh*, 25 (1971), 53–73.
- 23 Cf. Perceval’s mother, 420–24. The mediation of genealogies is further sustained by the remarkably similar portraits of Perceval’s father (435–41) and of his mother’s kinsman, the Fisher King (3507–23).
- 24 For comparison of the adventures of Perceval and Gauvain, see Haidu, *Aesthetic Distance*, pp. 113–259; A. Saly, “Beaupaire et Escavalon,” *TLL*, 16 (1978), 469–81; Saly, “L’Itinéraire intérieur dans le *Perceval* de Chrétien de Troyes et la structure de la quête de Gauvain,” in *Voyage*, pp. 353–61.
- 25 See Maddox, *Arthurian Romances*, pp. 116–18.
- 26 This pattern is doubled in the *Conte du graal*. For a survey of scholarship on this issue, see D. Maddox, “Trois sur deux: Théories de bipartition et de tripartition des oeuvres de Chrétien,” *O&C*, 5 (1981), pp. 91–102; Maddox, *Arthurian Romances*, pp. 5, 116–18, 119–21; D. Maddox, “Medieval Textualities and Inter-generic Form,” *ECR*, 33 (1993) pp. 41–50. On the pattern’s fortunes in Gautier d’Arras’s *Ille et Galeron*, see F. Wolfzettel, “La Découverte de la femme dans les romans de Gautier d’Arras,” *BDBA*, 7 (1990), 35–54.
- 27 On awakening as a topic of midcourse enlightenment and reorientation, see J. Burke, *Structures from the Trivium in the “Cantar de mio Cid”*, University of Toronto Press, 1991, pp. 4, 101–14.

- 28 This distinction brings to mind Freud's opinion that the instincts first seek satisfaction in the most direct manner possible; pleasure is initially the regulatory principle of mental functioning. In due course, a "reality principle" becomes dominant, as higher cognitive functions and external circumstances make adaptation and accommodation necessary. Free instinctual energy is transformed into bound energy; while the "pleasure principle" remains operative in the realm of fantasy, the reality principle directs bound energy to seek satisfactions in the real world. Sigmund Freud, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, vol. XVIII, London: Hogarth, 1959. See also J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith, New York: Norton, 1973, pp. 322–25, 379–82. Although Freud's distinction applies to a much larger, biologically grounded concept of mental functioning and *not* to the functioning of plots in fiction, see, for an extended discussion of the relationships between fictive plots and psychoanalytic concepts, P. Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, New York: Random House, 1985.
- 29 Figures representative of what Lacan calls "the paternal metaphor" of the symbolic order. J. Lacan, "D'une question préliminaire à tout traitement possible de la psychose," in *Écrits II*, Paris: Seuil, 1971, 43–102, see esp. pp. 71–74; 95–101. Hence also some fine examples of what René Girard has identified, in later fiction, as "triangular desire," where one desires another because the latter is desired by a third party. R. Girard, *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*, Paris: Grasset, 1961.
- 30 Hence the recurrent "image de la femme exhibée pour provoquer le conflit romanesque." J. Györy, "Prolégomènes à une imagerie de Chrétien de Troyes," *CCM*, 10 (1967), p. 370.
- 31 See N. Lacy, *The Craft of Chrétien de Troyes: an Essay on Narrative Art*, Leiden: Brill, 1980, pp. 95–98.
- 32 Again, Freud's treatise provides a useful comparison. Noting that clients in analysis typically display a "compulsion to repeat," Freud says that "the resistance of the conscious and unconscious ego operates under the sway of the pleasure principle; it seeks to avoid the unpleasure which would be produced by the liberation of the repressed. Our [i.e., the analyst's] efforts, on the other hand, are directed towards procuring the toleration of that unpleasure by an appeal to the reality principle" (*The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, vol. XVIII, pp. 40, 41). In Chrétien's textual dynamic, the hero is initially "under the sway of the pleasure principle"; his crisis compels a painful reassessment and acknowledgment of mandates emanating from the collective sphere, while the post-crisis sequel "procures" his "toleration" of the "unpleasure" resulting from the new awareness introduced by the crisis.
- 33 This twofold dynamic of desire and duty brings to mind Peter Brooks's observation that "there can be a psychoanalytic criticism of the text itself that does not become – as has usually been the case – a study of the psychogenesis of the text (the author's unconscious), the dynamic of literary response (the reader's unconscious), or the occult motivations of the characters (postulating an

- ‘unconscious’ for them).” In his view, the mechanisms and “design” of textuality offer meaningful access to psychic processes. Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, p. 112.
- 34 G. Duby, “Les ‘jeunes’ dans la société aristocratique dans la France du Nord-Ouest au xii^e siècle,” in *Hommes et structures du Moyen Age*, Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1973, pp. 213–25. The patterns of maturation reflected in Chrétien’s narratives, as in many other medieval epics, romances and brief narratives, are closely related to the developmental paradigm of *enfances*, on which see the fundamental article by F. Wolfzettel, “Zur Stellung und Bedeutung der *Enfances* in der altfranzösischen Epik,” *ZffSL*, 83 (1973), 317–48; 84 (1974), 1–32.
- 35 See the recent synthesis on the question of the “jeune” in historical and literary contexts by H. Martin, *Mentalités médiévales: xie-xve siècle*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996, pp. 297–342.
- 36 Chrétien’s romances hold in common with the *Policraticus* of his contemporary, John of Salisbury, a fundamental concern with promoting the ethical integrity of a militant order, while at the same time criticizing those who are unworthy or flawed exemplars of its precepts. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus: the Statesman’s Handbook of John of Salisbury*, trans. J. Dickinson, New York: Knopf, 1927.
- 37 On this tendency in later medieval romance, see F. Wolfzettel, “Artus en cage: Quelques remarques sur le roman arthurien et l’histoire,” in *Conjunctures*, pp. 575–88.
- 38 For further discussion of this “intertextuality of crisis,” see Maddox, *Arthurian Romances*, pp. 122–32.
- 39 One still finds such abusively general perceptions of Chrétien’s romances, for example in Martin, *Mentalités médiévales*, pp. 340–41, 342.
- 40 Or possibly Renaut de Bâgé. See A. Guerreau, “Renaud de Bâgé: *Le Bel Inconnu*, structure symbolique et signification sociale,” *Rom*, 103 (1982), 28–82, and F. Dubost, “*Tel cuide bien faire qui faut*: Le ‘beau jeu’ de Renaut avec le merveilleux,” in *Le Chevalier*, p. 26.
- 41 Especially to *Erec et Enide*. See W. Schofield, *Studies on Li beaus Desconus*, Boston, Mass.: Ginn, 1895; E. Philipot, “Un Episode d’*Erec et Enide*: La Joie de la cour – Mabon l’enchanteur,” *Rom*, 25 (1896), 258–94; B. Schmolke-Hasselmann, *Der arturische Versroman von Chretien bis Froissart: Zur Geschichte einer Gattung*, Tübingen: Neimeyer, 1980, pp. 162–64; M. T. Bruckner, *Narrative Invention in Twelfth-Century French Romance: The Convention of Hospitality (1160–1200)*, Lexington, Ky.: French Forum, 1980, pp. 234–38; R. Bauschke, “Auflösung des Artusromans und Defiktionalisierung im *Bel Inconnu*: Renauds de Beaujeu Auseinandersetzung mit Chrétien de Troyes,” *ZffSL*, 102 (1992), 42–63.
- 42 On the work’s bipartition see Jeanne Lods, “‘Le Baiser de la reine’ et ‘le cri de la fée,’” in *Jonin*, pp. 415–26, and M. Perret, “‘Architecture inscrite’ dans un roman arthurien du xiii^e siècle: *Le Bel Inconnu*,” in *Dufournet*, vol. III, pp. 1073–87.
- 43 At the midpoint, verse 3133, “Hom ne vit onques sa pabelle” [Nothing like it was ever seen], the *wivre* delivers the requisite embrace, the “Fier Baissier” (3186),

- thus ending the castle's enchantment. Renaut de Beaujeu, *Le Bel Inconnu, roman d'aventures*, ed. G. P. Williams, Paris: Champion, 1929.
- 44 Cf. M. Perret, "Statut du nom propre dans *Le Bel Inconnu*," in *Le Chevalier*, pp. 91–109.
- 45 The *fier baiser* is a traditional schema. See B. Amidei, "Il Tema del *fiero bacio* nel *Bel Inconnu* e la sua permanenza nella tradizione canterina," *Quaderni di Acme*, 23 (1995), 9–38.
- 46 Cf. E. Baumgarner, "Féerie-fiction: *Le Bel Inconnu* de Renaud de Beaujeu," in *Le Chevalier*, pp. 14–15.
- 47 See also *ibid.*, pp. 18–19.
- 48 The nine Arthurian romances are, in order, the *Merveilles de Rigomer*; the *Atre périlleux*; *Erec et Enide*; *Fergus*; *Hunbaut*; *Le Bel Inconnu*; the *Vengeance Raguidel*; *Le Chevalier au lion*; and *Le Chevalier de la charrete*.
- 49 L. Walters, "The Formation of a Gauvain Cycle in Chantilly Manuscript 472," *Neo*, 78 (1994), 29–34; Walters, "Chantilly MS 472 as a Cyclic Work," in *Cyc*, pp. 135–39.
- 50 On Guinglain and Lancelot in the Prose *Lancelot*, see E. Kennedy, *Lancelot and the Grail*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, Chapter Two.
- 51 See D. Maddox, "Inventing the Unknown: Rewriting in *Le Bel Inconnu*," in *Opus*, pp. 101–23.
- 52 The coat of arms of the lords of Bâgé, according to Guerreau ("Renaud de Bâgé," 30), who identifies the author as Renaud de Bâgé, lord of Saint-Trivier, ca. 1165–1230 (32–33).
- 53 Maddox, "Les Armoiries de l'Inconnu," in *Ménard*, vol. 11, pp. 933–42.
- 54 These supreme heroic challenges include the "Joie de la Cort" in *Erec*; "Pesme aventure" in *Yvain*; Gorre in the *Charrete*; and the Grail Castle and the Roche de Canguin in *Le Conte du graal*. See Maddox, *Arthurian Romances*, pp. 94–95, 111–12, 114–18, 130–32, 137.
- 55 Cf. *Le Chevalier au lion*, 2040–151, and *Le Bel Inconnu*, 3453–640.
- 56 It is noteworthy that in an Arthurian genealogy created intertextually from the works of Chrétien and Renaud, Guinglain and Cligés would both be the king's great-nephews and also first cousins. Guinglain's affective crisis may thus carry faint echoes of Cligés's, while the latter's triumph in the three-day tournament is one likely model for Guinglain's victory in the Arthurian tournament. Cf. Maddox, "Kinship Alliances in the *Cligés* of Chrétien de Troyes," *ECR*, 12 (1972), 3–12.
- 57 See also L. Harf-Lancner, "Entre la princesse et la fée: La Dame sans merci. *Le Bel Inconnu* de Renaut de Beaujeu," *op. cit.*, 7 (1996), 21–28, and S. Sturm, "Magic in *Le Bel Inconnu*," *ECR*, 12 (1972), 19–25.
- 58 Also contrasted here are two views of marriage, one arranged by feudal consensus, the other as the product of personal inclination. See K. Gravdal, "Pouvoir féodal et objets matériels dans *Le Bel Inconnu*," in *Le Chevalier*, pp. 58–61, and G. Duby, *Le Chevalier, la femme, et le prêtre*, Paris: Hachette, 1981.
- 59 See Philipot, "Episode"; and M. T. Bruckner, "Intertextuality," in *Legacy*, vol. 1, p. 235.

- 60 See J. Grigsby, "The Narrator in *Partonopeus de Blois*, *Le Bel Inconnu*, and *Joufroi de Poitiers*," *RPh*, 21 (1968), 536–45; and M. Perret, "Atemporalité et effet de fiction dans *Le Bel Inconnu*," in *Le Chevalier*, pp. 139–52.
- 61 For discussion of this issue, see in particular P. Haidu, "Realism, Fictionality, and the Theory of Genres in *Le Bel Inconnu*," *ECr*, 12 (1972), 37–60; A. Colby-Hall, "Frustration and Fulfillment: The Double Ending of *Le Bel Inconnu*," *YFS*, 67 (1984), 120–34; J. Guthrie, "The Je(u) in *Le Bel Inconnu*: Auto-Referentiality and Pseudo-Autobiography," *RR*, 75 (1984), 147–61; L. De Looze, "Generic Clash, Reader Response, and the Poetics of the Non-Ending in *Le Bel Inconnu*," in *Courtly*, pp. 113–33; P. Simons, "The 'Bel Sanblant': Reading *Le Bel Inconnu*," *FS*, 50 (1996), 257–74.
- 62 Cf. Perret: "cette éducation sentimentale se fait selon le mode onirique d'un interdit transgressé, fantasme d'un amour matriciel, l'amour inconditionnel et atemporel de la mère." "Atemporalité," p. 147.
- 63 On the background of these tendencies, see T. Hunt, "Aristotle, Dialectic, and Courtly Literature," *Viator*, 10 (1979), 95–129.
- 64 Cf. Baumgartner, "Féerie-fiction," pp. 7–11; Grigsby, "The Narrator," 538–45; Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, pp. 109–56; and A. Fourier, *Le Courant réaliste dans le roman courtois en France au Moyen Age*, Paris: Nizet, 1960, pp. 315–485.
- 65 Bauschke, "Auflösung des Artusromans," has recently suggested that in *Le Bel Inconnu* we find ourselves face to face with a new type of fiction, though to identify it as "realistic" is in my view debatable.
- 66 For the section of the romance common to both versions, see *Lancelot do Lac: The Non-Cyclic Old French Prose Romance*, ed. E. Kennedy, 2 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980. For the cyclic version, see *Lancelot: Roman en prose du XIII^e siècle*, ed. A. Micha, 9 vols., Paris and Geneva: Droz, 1978–83.
- 67 For the longer prose version of the rewritten *Charrete*, see *Lancelot: Roman en prose du XIII^e siècle*, ed. A. Micha, volume two; for the shorter version, see volume three.
- 68 On this question in the Prose *Lancelot* and elsewhere, see Kennedy, *Lancelot and the Grail*, pp. 10–48; Kennedy, "The Quest for Identity and the Importance of Lineage in Thirteenth-Century French Prose Romance," in *Ideals*, pp. 70–86.
- 69 References in parentheses are to the Micha edition. Roman numerals indicate chapters; arabic numerals designate numbered divisions within chapters.
- 70 See M. de Combarieu, "Le *Lancelot* comme roman d'apprentissage: Enfances, démesure et chevalerie," in *Approches*, pp. 101–36.
- 71 In addition to Ninienne, Perceval's mother in the *Conte du graal*, the Pucele in *Le Bel Inconnu*, and Melusine in Jean d'Arras *Roman de Mélusine*, are among the maternal figures who assume this tutelary role.
- 72 Cf. *Le Conte du graal*, 510–94.
- 73 Cf. Chapter Two of E. M. Jónsson, *Le Miroir: Naissance d'un genre littéraire*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995, pp. 157–212.
- 74 At times her commentary assumes an initiatory formality, as in her remarks on the moral significance of chivalric accoutrements – shield, sword, horse, and so

- on (xxia, 12–17). This brings to mind *L'Ordene de chevalerie*, where Hugh of Tabarie instructs Saladin in the principles of chivalry. *Le "Roman des eles" by Raoul de Hodenc and "L'Ordene de chevalerie"*, ed. K. Busby (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1983), *Ordene*, 104–256.
- 75 At this juncture, David has been identified as Lancelot's maternal ancestor (111a, 2), though he is as yet unaware of this. On Lancelot's lineage in context, see S. Hahn, "Genealogy and Adventure in the Cyclic Prose *Lancelot*," in *Conjunctions*, pp. 139–51.
- 76 See the *Conte du graal*, 1001–07; *Le Bel inconnu*, 229–40; and *Lancelot*, xx11a, 31.
- 77 *Les Lais anonymes des xiiie et xiiiie siècles*, ed. P. M. O. Tobin, Geneva: Droz, 1976, pp. 207–26.
- 78 Thus holding him captive within an infantile, imaginary sphere. Tydorel's mother is the excessively nurturant mother, akin to Lacan's "mère gavante" – the gorging mother – who unduly defers the child's access to subjectivity. See Lacan, "D'Une question préliminaire à tout traitement de la psychose," in *Ecrits II*, pp. 43–102, esp. p. 96.
- 79 For an analogue of this scene, see the late twelfth-century hagiographical romance *Robert le Diable*, ed. E. Löseth, Paris: Didot, 1903, based on BN fr. 25516. Because Robert's mother had solicited the Devil's help in order to conceive (43–48), the latter inspires her son's abominable deeds. Robert finally infers that his behavior stems from the circumstances of his birth and compels his mother to tell him the truth about his engenderment. Her story (429–43) motivates his repentance and expiation, and he ultimately becomes a hermit.
- 80 Her story was once characterized as an anomalous and redundant element, a mere *redite*. See J. Frappier, "A propos du lai de 'Tydorel' et de ses éléments mythiques," in *Mél. Imbs*, p. 565.
- 81 Fictions of the father, particularly the *absent* father, abound in Western literature and have received psychoanalytic study, as in *Father*. See also J. Lacan, "Desire and Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*," in *LPQRO*, pp. 11–52; J. Kristeva, "The Father, Love, and Banishment," in *L and P*, pp. 389–99; and D. Sundelson, *Shakespeare's Restorations of the Father*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1983.
- 82 On the kind of "mise en abyme rétro-prospective" exemplified by the mother's story in *Tydorel* see L. Dällenbach, *Le Récit spéculaire: Essai sur la mise en abyme*, Paris: Seuil, 1977, pp. 89–94, and J.-C. Huchet, *Le roman médiéval*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984, pp. 55–59, on the judgment of Paris in the *Roman de Troie* as a retro-prospective *mise en abyme*.
- 83 This lay is suggestive of a frame tale that might originally have contextualized a lost collection of stories told to Tydorel. Indeed, in the six-hundred-second of *The Thousand and One Nights*, the narratee paradoxically hears his own story. See J. Borges, *Other Inquisitions, 1937–1952*, trans. R. L. C. Simms, Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1964, p. 45.
- 84 See also F. Dubost, "Yonec le vengeur et Tydorel le veilleur," in *Dufournet*, vol. 1, 449–67.

- 85 *Charrete*, 1829–954. In both cases, the tomb is to be Lancelot's own (*Charrete*, 1932–36).
- 86 See also D. Poirion, "La Douleureuse Garde," in *Approches*, pp. 25–48; C. Méla, *La Reine et le Graal: La Conjointure dans les romans du Graal, de Chrétien de Troyes au Livre de Lancelot*, Paris: Seuil, 1984, pp. 385–86.
- 87 See, for example, the magnificently embellished tomb of Camille in *Le Roman d'Enéas*, ed. J.-J. Salverda de Grave, Paris: Champion, 1931, vol. II, 7531–7724, and the tombs of the Emir of Babylon and Alexander the Great, in Alexandre de Paris, *Le Roman d'Alexandre*, ed. and trans. L. Harf-Lancner, Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1994, Branch III, laisses 420–24, and Branch IV, laisses 63–66. See also E. Baumgartner, "Tombeaux pour guerriers et amazones: Sur un motif descriptif de l'*Enéas* et du *Roman de Troie*," *MRS*, 8 (1989), 37–50.
- 88 See K. Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933, vol. 1, pp. 201–539, and O. B. Hardison, Jr., *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages*, Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965, pp. 178–252.
- 89 An event recorded by Thietmar, bishop of Merseburg, Otto of Lomello, and Adémar of Chabannes. See the discussion of these accounts by S. Nichols, *Romanesque Signs: Early Medieval Narrative and Iconography*, New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 1983, pp. 66–94.
- 90 P. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Theft of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*, Princeton University Press, 1978.
- 91 See C. Radford, "Glastonbury Abbey," in *QAB*, pp. 97–122.
- 92 J. Berlioz and J.-L. Eichenlaub, "Les tombeaux des chevaliers de la table ronde à Saint-Emiland (Saône-et-Loire)?: Recherches sur un *exemplum* du dominicain Etienne de Bourbon (mort vers 1261)," *Rom*, 109 (1988), 18–49.
- 93 As topical loci at which a significant coordination of time and space occurs, the tombs in the Prose *Lancelot* and their counterparts in other Old French narratives are exemplary of what Bakhtin calls the "chronotope," a "formally constitutive category of literature" expressing "the inseparability of space and time." See M. M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, p. 84.
- 94 References are to *Le Haut livre du graal: Perlesvaus*, ed. W. A. Nitze and T. A. Jenkins, 2 vols., University of Chicago Press, 1932–37.
- 95 The *Perlesvaus* may have appeared after the non-cyclic Prose *Lancelot* but before the cyclic rewriting. See C. Lloyd-Morgan, "The Relationship Between the *Perlesvaus* and the Prose *Lancelot*," *MAev*, 53 (1984), 239–52; F. Bogdanow, "Le *Perlesvaus*," in *Grundriss*, pp. 43–67, and T. Kelly, "*Le haut livre du graal: Perlesvaus*": *A Structural Study*, Geneva: Droz, 1974.
- 96 See Kennedy, *Lancelot and the Grail*, and "The Quest for Identity," pp. 79–86.
- 97 See J. Frappier, "Le Personnage de Galehaut dans le *Lancelot* en prose," in *ACTR*, pp. 181–208; C. Marchello-Nizia, "Amour courtois, société masculine, et figures du pouvoir," *Annales ESC*, 36 (1981), pp. 974–77; and E. Baumgartner, "Géants et chevaliers," in *Spirit*, pp. 12–13.

- 98 See R. Colliot, "Les Epitaphes arthuriennes," *BBSIA*, 25 (1973), 155–75.
- 99 See also E. Baumgartner, "From Lancelot to Galahad: the Stakes of Filiation," in *Kibler*, 14–30.
- 100 See the end of *La Mort le roi Artu*, ed. J. Frappier, Paris: Champion, 1964, pp. 261–63, to which we shall presently return.
- 101 On these episodes in relation to medieval arts of memory see D. Maddox, "'A tombeau ouvert': Memory and Mortuary Monuments in the Prose *Lancelot*," in "*Por le soie amisté*": *Essays in Honor of Norris J. Lacy*, eds. K. Busby and C. Jones, Amsterdam and Atlanta, Ga.: Rodopi, 2000, pp. 323–38.
- 102 See also E. Baumgartner, "L'Aventure amoureuse dans le 'Lancelot en Prose'," in *Liebe*, pp. 104–6. Kennedy maintains that the love affair constituting the core of the plot would exclude Lancelot's assumption of sedentary lordship; he must remain "a perpetual knight-errant" ("Identity," p. 86).
- 103 Cf. Wolfzettel, "*Enfances*."
- 104 *Lancelot do lac*, ed. Kennedy, p. 54, lines 11–34. See also, after the episode of the false Guinevere, the hermit's castigation of Arthur (Micha edition, ix, 3). The motif of specular counsel to a monarch or other leader appears early in Old French literature. See, for example, Alexandre de Paris, *Le Roman d'Alexandre*, where Aristotle advises Alexander (Branch I, 31, 674–94; Branch III, 2, 51–70; III, 5, 100–06).
- 105 *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*, 1. ed. P. Ménard, *Des Aventures de Lancelot à la fin de la "Folie Tristan"*, Geneva: Droz, 1987, pp. 269–72. See also M. Boulton, "Tristan and His Doubles as Singers of *Lais*: Love and Music in the Prose *Roman de Tristan*," in *Shifts*, pp. 53–69, for other passages in the Prose *Tristan* that show affinities with our schema.
- 106 *La Queste del saint graal*, ed. A. Pauphilet, Paris: Champion, 1923.
- 107 On this aspect of the *Queste*, see J. Frappier, "Le graal et la chevalerie," *Rom*, 75 (1954), 165–201; T. Todorov, "La quête du récit: le graal," in *Poétique de la prose*, Paris: Seuil, 1971, 129–50; E. Baumgartner, *L'Arbre et le pain: Essai sur la "Queste del saint graal"*, Paris: SEDES, 1981; N. F. Regalado, "'La Chevalerie celestiel': Spiritual Transformations of Secular Romance in *La Queste del saint graal*," in *Romance*, 91–113. On reflexivity: L. De Looze, "A Story of Interpretations: The *Queste del saint graal* as Metaliterature," *RR*, 76 (1985), 129–47.
- 108 See, for example, the succession of episodes in which Perceval learns that in what has just befallen him his spiritual mettle was being tested, pp. 91–115; these explanations after the fact together comprise an initiatory itinerary.
- 109 Cf. D. Maddox, "Roman et manipulation," *Poétique* 66 (1986), pp. 189–90.
- 110 *Lancelot*, Micha ed., vol. VIII, LIIA, 102–116.
- 111 On illustrations of this scene, see A. Stones, "Arthurian Art Since Loomis," in *Arturus*, pp. 21–78; and M. T. Bruckner, "Reconstructing Arthurian History: Lancelot and the Vulgate Cycle," in *Memory*, pp. 62–63, 75. On Dante's evocation of the scene in *Inferno* v, see D. Maddox, "The Arthurian Intertexts of *Inferno* v," *DS*, 114 (1996), 113–27.
- 112 See also C. Dover, "The Split-Shield Motif in the Old French Prose *Lancelot*," *AY*, 1 (1991), 43–61.

- 113 *La Mort le roi Artu*, ed. Frappier, pp. 61–65.
- 114 Arthur reads “the handwriting on the wall,” as it were: “si avint que li rois commença a regarder entor lui et vit les peintures et les ymages que Lancelos avoit portretes tandis comme il demora leanz en prison. Li rois Artus savoit bien tant de lettres qu’il pooit auques un escrit entendre; et quant il ot veües les letres des ymages qui devoient les senefiances des portretures, si les commença a lire . . .” (*Mort le roi Artu*, p. 61) [and so it came to pass that the king began to look about him and saw the paintings and figures that Lancelot had portrayed when he was imprisoned there. King Arthur was literate enough to be somewhat capable of making out a written document, so when he saw the letters and images that gave the meaning of the portrayals, he began to read them . . .].
- 115 See also M. Zink, “Les Toiles d’Agamanor et les fresques de Lancelot,” *Littérature*, 38 (1980), 43–61; J. Dornbush, *Pygmalion’s Figure: Reading Old French Romance*, Lexington, Ky., French Forum, 1990, pp. 99–139; and P. V. Rockwell, “Remembering *Troie*: the Implications of *Ymages* in the *Roman de Troie* and the *Prose Lancelot*,” *Arthuriana*, 7 (1997), 20–35.
- 116 Two recent collective volumes address cyclicity in medieval literature: *Cyc* and *Transtext*. See also J. Taylor, “Arthurian Cyclicity: The Construction of History in the Late French Prose Cycles,” in *AY*, 2 (1992), 209–23.
- 117 See F. Suard, *La Chanson de geste*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993, pp. 80–120; J. Frappier, *Les Chansons de geste du cycle de Guillaume d’Orange*, vol. II, Paris: SEDES, 1967, pp. 8–9; and R. H. Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages*, University of Chicago Press, 1983, pp. 92–108.
- 118 See P. Le Gentil, “The Work of Robert de Boron and the *Didot Perceval*,” in *ALMA*, pp. 251–62; R. Pickens, “Histoire et commentaire chez Chrétien de Troyes et Robert de Boron: Robert de Boron et le livre de Philippe de Flandre,” in *Legacy*, vol II, pp. 17–39; and Pickens, “‘Mais de çou ne parole pas Crestiens de Troies . . .’: a Re-examination of the *Didot-Perceval*,” *Rom*, 105 (1984), 492–510.
- 119 Robert de Boron, *Le Roman de l’Estoire dou Graal*, ed. W. A. Nitze, Paris: Champion, 1927; repr. 1983.
- 120 See *ibid.*, pp. ix–xv; and R. O’Gorman, “The *Gospel of Nicodemus* in the Vernacular Literature of Medieval France,” in *Nicodemus*, pp. 119–25.
- 121 He anticipates this mode from the outset by depicting an angel’s revelation to Joachim that his wife Anne will give birth to Mary, the mother of Jesus (61–80). Although the early material on the Virgin has been perceived as a “digression” (Pickens, “Histoire,” p. 26), this passage establishes the principle of direct divine revelation of the future course of events that prevails throughout the balance of the work, in eight passages (summarized in the following paragraphs): 728–960; 2083–216; 2466–554; p. 95, prose passage; 2775–828; 2889–910; 3008–146; 3389–406.
- 122 In the *Estoire*, writing based on originary divine utterances constitutes a powerful “mythe de la source inépuisable,” according to E. Baumgartner, “Robert de Boron et l’imaginaire du livre du graal,” in *Arturus*, pp. 259–68.

- 123 This trilogy is comprised of a prose adaptation of Robert's verse *Estoire* or *Joseph d'Arimathie*, a prose romance of *Merlin*, and a prose *Perceval*, and is found in two manuscripts, BN fr. n.a. 4166 and Modena, Estense E39. For an edition of the Modena manuscript, see Robert de Boron, *Le Roman du graal*, ed. B. Cerquiglini, Paris: Union Générale d'Édition, 1981; for the *Merlin*, of which forty-six complete manuscripts and nine fragments are known, see Robert de Boron, *Merlin: Roman du XIII^e siècle*, ed. A. Micha, Geneva: Droz, 1980, based on BN fr. 747; for the *Perceval*, see *The Didot Perceval According to the Manuscripts of Modena and Paris*, ed. W. Roach, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1941.
- 124 For both versions of this episode see the appendix to Micha's edition of the *Merlin*, pp. 292–302, and Micha, *Etude sur le "Merlin" de Robert de Boron*, Geneva: Droz, 1980.
- 125 The "end," that is, in terms of the texts' order in many of the cyclic manuscripts: *L'Estoire del saint graal*, *L'Estoire Merlin*, *Lancelot*, *La Quête du graal*, and *La Mort le roi Artu*. As for the order of composition, the cycle's nucleus – *Lancelot-Quête-Mort* – was augmented by the *Estoire Merlin* as a kind of prologue, and finally by the proto-historical *Estoire del saint graal*. See E. Baumgartner, "Espace du texte, espace du manuscrit: Les Manuscrits du *Lancelot-Graal*," in *Écritures II*, Paris: Le Sycomore, 1985, pp. 95–116; Baumgartner, "Temps linéaire, temps circulaire et écriture romanesque (XI^e-XIII^e siècles)," in *Le Temps*, pp. 7–21; Baumgartner, "Les Techniques narratives dans le roman en prose," in *Legacy*, vol. 1, pp. 167–90.
- 126 See also E. Kennedy, "Failure in Arthurian Romance," *MAev*, 60 (1991), 16–32.
- 127 See also P. V. Rockwell, "'Je ne suiz mie soffisanz': Insufficiency and Cyclicity in the Lancelot-Grail Cycle," in *Transtext*, pp. 71–91.
- 128 *La Mort le roi Artu*, p. 263.

3 FROM ENCOUNTER TO SPECULAR ENCOUNTER IN FICTIONS OF THE COURTLY TRYST

- 1 See also E. Vance, "The Châtelain de Coucy: Enunciation and Story in *Trouvère Lyric*," in *Mervelous Signals: Poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986, p. 87.
- 2 As for example in the anonymous *aube* "Gaite de la tor" [*Anthologie de la poésie lyrique française des XIII^e et XIII^e siècles*, ed. J. Dufournet, Paris: Gallimard, 1989, pp. 42–47]. See also A. Jeanroy, *Les Origines de la poésie lyrique en France au Moyen Âge*, Paris: Champion, 1925, pp. 61–83.
- 3 These attitudes are well exemplified by the Chastelain de Coucy in "A vous, amant, plus k'a nulle autre gent": "Et quant recort sa douce compaignie / Et les soulaz qu'el me soloit moustre, / Comment me puet li cuers u cors durer." (III: 5–7) [And when I recall her sweet presence and the tenderness she would show toward me, I marvel that my heart can remain within me]. "Convenra m'il qu'en la fin congié praigne? / Oil, par Dieu, ne puet estre autrement: / Sanz li m'estuet

- aler en terre estraigne" (II: 1–3) [Then must I finally take my leave? Yes, God knows, it can be not otherwise; without her must I venture into an alien land]. *Chansons attribuées au Chastelain de Coucy*, ed. A. Lerond, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964, pp. 57–61.
- 4 On stylistic registers, see P. Zumthor, *Langue et techniques poétiques à l'époque romane* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1963, pp. 67–69, and Zumthor, "Registres linguistiques et poésie aux XII^e-XIII^e siècles," *CN*, 34 (1974), 151–61. On recurrent semantic patterns in lyrics of the *trouvères*, see G. Lavis, *L'Expression de l'affectivité dans la poésie lyrique française du Moyen Âge (XII^e-XIII^e siècle)*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1972.
- 5 As a virtuality, the lyric tryst suggests the notion of "latent" narrative in medieval lyric. See Vance, *Merveilous Signals*, p. 101; and P. Zumthor, "Les Narrativités latentes dans le discours lyrique médiéval," in *Nature*, pp. 39–55.
- 6 This observation from Coucy, "A vous, amant" is similar to countless others: "Or seront lié li faus losengeour, / Qui tant pesoit des biens qu'avoir soloie" (v: 1–2) [Now the treacherous scandalmongers may rejoice, they who rued the good fortune to which I was accustomed]. See S. Kay, "The Contradictions of Courtly Love and the Origins of Courtly Poetry: the Evidence of the *Lauzengiers*," *JMEMS*, 26 (1996), 209–53; L. Paterson, *The World of the Troubadours: Medieval Occitan Society, c. 1100–1300*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 104–07; and E. Baumgartner, "Trouvères et losengiers," *CCM*, 25 (1982), 171–78. The inquisitive gaze of the *losengiers* is a cognitive position within lyric whose potential will be exploited by narrative poets in their depictions of aftermaths of trysts, as we shall see.
- 7 Cf. M. T. Bruckner, *Shaping Romance: Interpretation, Truth, and Closure in Twelfth-Century French Fictions*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, p. 81.
- 8 See M. Lazar, *Amour courtois et fin'amors dans la littérature du XII^e siècle*, Paris: Klincksieck, 1964, pp. 233–43. On the *Charrete* and troubadour lyric, see also L. Topsfield, *Chrétien de Troyes: A Study of the Arthurian Romances*, Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp. 105–74.
- 9 M.-C. Zaï, ed., *Les Chansons courtoises de Chrétien de Troyes*, Berne and Frankfurt: Lang, 1974; P. Haidu, "Text and History: the Semiosis of Twelfth-Century Lyric as Sociohistorical Phenomenon (Chrétien de Troyes: 'D'Amors qui m'a tolu')," *Semiotica*, 33 (1981), 1–62.
- 10 Cf. Lazar, *Amour courtois*, p. 240.
- 11 Cf. J. Rychner, "Le Sujet et la signification du *Chevalier de la charrette*," *VR*, 27 (1968), 50–71; J.-C. Payen, "Lancelot contre Tristan: La Conjuración d'un mythe subversif (réflexions sur l'idéologie romanesque au Moyen Âge)," in *Le Gentil*, pp. 617–32; D. Kelly, "Gauvain and *Fin'Amors* in the Poems of Chrétien de Troyes," *SP*, 67 (1970), 453–60; and L. De Looze, "Chivalry Qualified: the Character of Gauvain in Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*," *RR*, 74 (1983), 253–59.
- 12 See Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, pp. 60–108.
- 13 See E. Kennedy, *Lancelot and the Grail*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 48–78;

- 366n2; and J. Dornbush, *Pygmalion's Figure: Reading Old French Romance*, Lexington, Ky.: French Forum, 1990, pp. 134–35.
- 14 G. Paris, "Etude sur les romans de la Table Ronde: Lancelot du Lac. II. Le Conte de la charrete," *Rom*, 12 (1883), 459–534. See D. Hult, "Gaston Paris and the Invention of Courtly Love," in *Medievalism*, pp. 192–224. On the work's susceptibility to contentious critical appraisal, see M. T. Bruckner, "An Interpreter's Dilemma: Why Are There So Many Interpretations of Chrétien's *Chevalier de la charrete*?" *RPh*, 40 (1986), 159–80.
- 15 *The Romance of Tristan by Béroul, A Poem of the Twelfth Century*, ed. A. Ewert, Oxford: Blackwell, 1971, I, 1981–2121. All citations of the poem are from this edition. On Morois, see P. Le Gentil, "L'Episode du Morois et la signification du *Tristan* de Béroul," in *Spitzer*, pp. 267–74; E. Vinaver, "La Forêt de Morois," *CCM*, 11 (1968), 1–13; and J. Dufournet, "Etude de l'épisode du roi Marc dans la hutte des amants," *IL*, 27 (1975), 79–87.
- 16 See J. Frappier, "Structure et sens du *Tristan*: Version commune, version courtoise," *CCM*, 6 (1963), 255–80; 441–54; E. Baumgartner, *Tristan et Iseut*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1987, pp. 38–75.
- 17 Lazar (*Amour courtois*, pp. 153–54) sees the sword's placement as a deliberate effort on their part to signal their chastity, but see B. N. Sargent-Baur, "Truth, Half-Truth, Untruth: Béroul's Telling of the Tristan Story," in *Craft*, p. 407.
- 18 See R. H. Bloch, "Tristan, the Myth of the State and the Language of the Self," *YFS*, 51 (1975), pp. 64–5, and Bloch, *Medieval French Literature and Law*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1977, pp. 238–48.
- 19 See also J. Grigsby, "L'Empire des signes chez Béroul et Thomas," in *Foulon*, vol. II, p. 116. Cf. Baumgartner, *Tristan*, p. 58.
- 20 Cf. Sargent-Baur, "Truth," p. 396; E. J. Burns, *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, p. 204.
- 21 On the ambiguity of "seignor" here, see P. Jonin, "L'Esprit celtique dans le roman de Béroul," in *Le Gentil*, p. 410.
- 22 Jonin describes Iseut's performance as a "mélange de rouerie et de fragilité plaintive." P. Jonin, *Les Personnages féminins dans les romans français de Tristan au XIII^e siècle: Etude des influences contemporaines*, Aix-en-Provence: Faculté des Lettres, 1958, p. 22.
- 23 On the reader's involvement here, see A. C. Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love-Narratives*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 54.
- 24 On their ambiguous oaths, see B. Blakey, "Truth and Falsehood in the *Tristan* of Béroul," in *Reid*, pp. 25–27; and G. Bromily, "Le Serment ambigu dans le *Roman de Tristan* de Béroul: La Conscience et le droit, une tentative de conciliation," in *Le Droit*, pp. 31–39.
- 25 Cf. G. Raynaud de Lage, "Du Style de Béroul," *Rom*, 85 (1964), 518–30: God is invoked thirty-two times in lines 1–572, fourteen times by Iseut, ten by Tristan, especially in insincere utterances (522).

- 26 See 22–25; 35–39; 128–31; 149–56.
- 27 On the complexity of Mark's reactions, see A. Varvaro, *Beroul's "Romance of Tristan"*, trans. J. Barnes, Manchester University Press, 1972, pp. 164–73.
- 28 Cf. Spearing, *Voyeur*, p. 52.
- 29 On the juridical aspects of this scene, see Jonin, *Personnages féminins*, pp. 59–105.
- 30 See also E. York, "Isolt's Trial in Bérout and *La Folie Tristan d'Oxford*," *M&H*, New Series 6 (1975), 157–61.
- 31 Cf. N. Lacy, "Irony and Distance in Bérout's *Tristan*," *FR*, 45 (1971), 21–28.
- 32 Bérout's text fuses "*vérité* and *mensonge* into a fiction that is both seductive and subversive." E. J. Burns, "How Lovers Lie Together: Infidelity and Fictive Discourse in the *Roman de Tristan*," *Tristania* 8 (1983), 26.
- 33 Neither to death, nor even to the death of love, for in Bérout the weakening of the potion's influence after three years in no way puts an end to the couple's love (cf. Baumgartner, *Tristan*, p. 73); instead, it relieves their relationship of the onus of an ineluctable necessity while subjecting it to the control of memory, intellect, will, and mutual consent. See also T. Hunt, "Abelardian Ethics and Bérout's *Tristan*," *Rom*, 98 (1977), 501–40.
- 34 *La Folie Tristan d'Oxford*, ed. E. Hoepffner, Faculté des Lettres of the University of Strasbourg, 1943, second edition.
- 35 Cf. J. Schaefer, "Tristan's Folly: Feigned or Real?," *Tristania* 3 (1977), 3–15; and D. Robertson, "Toward an Aesthetic of the Conteur: The *Folie Tristan*," *Tristania* 2 (1977), 3–11.
- 36 On Tantris as a "personnage carnavalesque," see J.-C. Payen, "Le Palais de verre dans la *Folie d'Oxford*," *Tristania* 5 (1980), 18. See also N. F. Regalado, "Tristan and Renart: Two Tricksters," *ECr*, 16 (1976), 30–38; and M. Blakeslee, "Tristan the Trickster," in *Love's Masks: Identity, Intertextuality and Meaning in the Old French Tristan Poems*, Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989, pp. 113–26.
- 37 In the Oxford *Folie* most of Tantris's recollections are in chronological order, whereas in the Berne version they are distributed more randomly. Cf. G. Bromily, *Thomas's "Tristan" and the "Folie Tristan d'Oxford"*, London: Grant & Cutler, 1986, p. 81.
- 38 P. Haidu, "Text, Pretextuality, and Myth in the *Folie Tristan d'Oxford*," *MLN*, 88 (1973), 712. Cf. Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, p. 28 and p. 232n34, and J. Schaefer, "Specularity in the Mediaeval *Folie Tristan* Poems, or Madness as Metadiscourse," *Neo*, 77 (1993), 355–68. On the Oxford *Folie*'s relationship to Thomas and Bérout, see Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, pp. 30–34.
- 39 G. Genette, *Figures III*, Paris: Seuil, 1972, pp. 243–45, translation mine.
- 40 On the former type in *Le Bel Inconnu*, see M. Perret, "Atemporalité et effet de fiction" dans *Le Bel Inconnu*," in *Le Chevalier*, pp. 139–52. The latter type, illustrated by the *Folie Tristan*, also occurs in the epilogue of Jean d'Arras's *Roman de Mélusine*. See D. Maddox, "Configuring the Epilogue: Ending and the Ends of Fiction in the *Roman de Mélusine*," in *Mélusine*, pp. 267–87.

- 41 On deferred recognition, see M. T. Bruckner, "The *Folie Tristan* d'Oxford: Speaking Voice, Written Text," *Tristania* 7 (1982), 47–59; and Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, pp. 13–25.
- 42 As Haidu has observed ("Text," 714). See also L. Sumberg, "The *Folie Tristan* in the Romance Lyric," *KRQ*, 14 (1967), 1–15.
- 43 Cf. Genette: "toute intrusion du narrateur ou du narrataire extradiégétique dans l'univers diégétique . . . ou inversement . . . produit un effet de bizarrerie soit bouffonne . . . soit fantastique" (*Figures III*, p. 244).
- 44 It is as if the real Martin Guerre had returned and been unrecognized and rejected by his disbelieving wife! See Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.
- 45 Although the story also demonstrates that *concealment* of the affair generates conflict and "creates as many difficulties as it is said to solve . . ." See T. Hunt, "The Art of Concealment: *La Châtelaine de Vergi*," *FS*, 47 (1993), 139.
- 46 See J. Frappier, "*La Chastelaine de Vergi*, Marguerite de Navarre et Bandello," in *Frappier*, p. 402.
- 47 Cf. L. De Looze, "The Untellable Story: Language and Writing in *La Chastelaine de Vergi*," *RR*, 79 (1988), 45.
- 48 *La Chastelaine de Vergi, poème du XIII^e siècle*, ed. G. Raynaud, fourth edn. rev. L. Foulet, Paris: Champion, 1979.
- 49 Cf. J.-C. Payen, "Structure et sens de la *Châtelaine de Vergi*," *MAge*, 79 (1973), p. 215.
- 50 See also A. Maraud, "Le Lai de *Lanval* et *La Chastelaine de Vergi*: La Structure narrative," *Rom*, 93 (1972), 433–59; and on stylistic contrasts, see J. Rychner, "La Présence et le point de vue du narrateur dans deux récits courts: Le Lai de *Lanval* et la *Châtelaine de Vergi*," *VR*, 30 (1980), 86–103.
- 51 See also L. Arrathoon, "The *Châtelaine de Vergi*: A Structural Study of an Old French Artistic Short Narrative," *LS*, 7 (1974), 151–80.
- 52 Cf. Spearing, *Voyeur*, p. 117.
- 53 On the poem's lyric features, see P. Zumthor, "De la chanson au récit: *La Chastelaine de Vergi*," *VR*, 27 (1968), 81–95. On its affinities with other narratives, see P. Lakits, "*La Châtelaine de Vergi*" et l'évolution de la nouvelle courtoise, Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, 1966.
- 54 Cf. P. Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, Paris: Seuil, 1972, pp. 380–83.
- 55 The manipulative Duchess joins the ranks of many other major characters in Old French texts. See D. Maddox, "Roman et manipulation," *Poétique*, 66 (1986), 179–90; Maddox, "Le Discours persuasif au XIII^e siècle: La Manipulation épique et dramatique," *MR*, 12 (1987), 55–73.
- 56 Cf. R. H. Bloch, "The Lay and the Law: Sexual/Textual Transgression in *La Chastelaine de Vergi*, the *Lai d'Ignaure*, and the *Lais* of Marie de France," *SFR*, 14 (1990), 181–210; cf. E. Kostoroski, "Quest in Query and the *Chastelaine de Vergi*," *M&H*, New Series 3 (1972), 179–97.
- 57 According to P. Clifford, "*La Chastelaine de Vergi*" and Jean Renart's "*Le Lai de l'Ombre*," London: Grant & Cutler, 1986, this is the principal *aventure* in the poem (p. 47).

- 58 Kotoroski ("Quest," 187) observes that the *chienet* "is a symbol of the bond which unites the lovers . . . and also of the delicate but efficacious insinuation which will snap that bond." As a signifier, however, the *chienet* is not a "symbol," but rather an allusively recurrent *index*.
- 59 On speech acts and their abrogation, see D. Maddox, *Semiotics of Deceit: the Pathelin Era*, Lewisburg, Penn.: Bucknell University Press, 1984, Chapter Eight, "Illocupathelin: Speech Actor," pp. 118–32.
- 60 The secret is analogous to the "purloined" letter in Poe's tale, as progressively analyzed by J. Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" *YFS*, 48 (1972), 38–72; J. Derrida, "The Purveyor of Truth," *YFS*, 52 (1975), 31–113; and B. Johnson, "The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida," in *The Critical Difference*, Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980, pp. 110–46. As is the case with the elusive missive in that story, whoever acquires the secret of the ritual in the orchard acquires the "phallus," i.e., is uniquely empowered by the forbidden knowledge having to do with a clandestine love affair.
- 61 In each case, the encounter's "veridictory" disclosure of the "true" within specific discursive constraints is subverted. On veridiction, see A. J. Greimas and J. Courtés, "The Cognitive Dimension of Narrative Discourse," *NLH*, 20 (1989), 563–79; D. Maddox, "Veridiction, Verification, Verifications: Reflections on Methodology," *NLH*, 20 (1989), 661–77.
- 62 See U. Eco, "The Theory of Signs and the Role of the Reader," *BMMLA*, 14 (1981), pp. 43–45; G. Proni, "Genesi e senso dell'abduzione in Peirce," *Versus*, 28 (1981), 29–50; and Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984, pp. 39–45.
- 63 See U. Eco, "Horns, Hooves, Insteps: Some Hypotheses on Three Types of Abduction," in *Sign*, pp. 198–202.
- 64 See Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics* on the importance of the middle term in definitions: "in all our searches we seek either if there is a middle term or what the middle term is. For the middle term is the explanation . . . the search for the middle term is made clear by the cases in which the middle term is perceptible." *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Princeton University Press, 1984, vol. 1, p. 148.
- 65 See N. Harrowitz, "The Body of the Detective Model: Charles S. Peirce and Edgar Allen Poe," in *Sign*, pp. 179–97; and U. Eco, "Guessing: From Aristotle to Sherlock Holmes," *Versus*, 30 (1981), 3–19.
- 66 Deely has pointed out that Peirce's so-called "discovery" of abduction amounts to more of a rediscovery of that which had come to be known as *ascensus* in medieval logical traditions nourished by the Aristotelian New Logic; he has shown that medieval logic grounded in the *Organon* also had a tripartite concept of inference: *ascensus* (abduction); *sylogismus* (deduction); *descensus* (induction), so that the three categories of Peirce (2. 96) would amount to a "rediscovery." See J. Deely, *Introducing Semiotic: its History and Doctrine*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, pp. 72–74. Cf. Jacques Maritain, *Eléments de philosophie*. II. *L'Ordre des concepts*. i. *Petite logique (Logique formelle)*, Paris: Tequi, 1923, p. 267.

- 67 In Aristotelian terms he errs in assuming that his argument based on visible signs is an irrefutable demonstration and not simply made “with regard to opinion and only dialectically” (*Posterior Analytics* 81b 19). Whereas “demonstration depends on universals” (81b 1), dialectic proceeds “from the most reputable [i.e., probable] propositions possible; so that even if there is not in truth any middle term for AB but there seems to be, anyone who deduces through this has deduced dialectically. But with regard to truth one must inquire on the basis of what actually holds” (81b 20).
- 68 Cf. Baumgartner, *Tristan*, p. 56; Sargent-Baur, “Truth,” p. 404.
- 69 This term brings to mind the *Posterior Analytics*, in which Aristotle sets forth his theory of demonstration “from what is necessary” (73a 24).
- 70 An intention that runs counter to his feudal obligation to slay the couple, according to R. H. Bloch, *Medieval French Literature and Law*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977, p. 243. Cf. Baumgartner, *Tristan*, pp. 57–58.
- 71 One could in fact analyze Tristan’s reasoning here in terms of Aristotle’s account of four types of explanation proved through a middle term (*Posterior Analytics*, 94a 20–94b).
- 72 The verb “espruver” of verse 179 has nothing to do with “testing Iseut,” however, but rather with Tristan’s desire to see how Mark will mistakenly consider him “asoté” (185) and a “bricun” (187).
- 73 On the significance of voice as catalyst of recognition in this scene, see Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, pp. 25–36.
- 74 See also De Looze, “Untellable Story,” 48.
- 75 As characterized by Jean Dufournet and Liliane Dulac, eds. and trans., *La Châtelaine de Vergi*, Paris: Gallimard, 1994, p. 27.
- 76 See also P. McCracken, *The Romance of Adultery: Queenship and Sexual Transgression in Old French Literature*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998; De Looze, “Untellable Story,” pp. 49–50; Lakits, “*La Châtelaine de Vergi*,” pp. 71–73; and L. Arrathoon, “Jacques de Vitry, the Tale of Calogrenant, *La Chastelaine de Vergi*, and the Genres of Medieval Narrative Fiction,” in *Craft*, pp. 351–53.
- 77 As for example in Old French epic by the numerous “prières du plus grand péril,” which compare heroic acts with biblical prototypes. See J. Frappier, *Les Chansons de geste du cycle de Guillaume d’Orange*, Paris: SEDES, 1967, vol. II, pp. 131–40.
- 78 See P. Van Nuffel, “Problèmes de sémiotique interprétative: L’épopée,” *Langues Romanes*, 27 (1973), pp. 150–72; and L. Crist, “Deep Structures in the *chansons de geste*: Hypotheses for a Taxonomy,” *Olifant*, 3 (1975), pp. 3–35.
- 79 In the *Posterior Analytics*, at the end of his analysis of demonstration as a scientific method, Aristotle praises intuition for providing access to fundamental principles and for being invariably accurate, like the science of which it is the founding principle (II, 19). See also the commentary on intuition given by John of Salisbury in his *Metalogicon*, IV, 18 and 19 (trans. D. McGarry, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1971, pp. 230–32) on the basis of his reading of the *Organon* of Aristotle.

- 80 Inference was not always so highly esteemed, for in ascending from material evidence toward discovery of the universal one risks falling into error, as we see in these specious analyses of trysts. Cf. *Metalogicon*, iv, 33 (McGarry, pp. 253–54).
- 81 See E. Jeaneau, *La Philosophie médiévale*, Paris: PUF, 1967, pp. 18–19; I. Bochenski, *A History of Formal Logic*, trans. I. Thomas, New York: Chelsea, 1956; Jean Pépin, “Saint Thomas et la philosophie du xiii^e siècle,” in *La Philosophie de Platon à Saint Thomas*, ed. F. Châtelet, Paris: Hachette, 1972, pp. 289–90.
- 82 In fact, the *Logica Vetus* includes not only the *Categories*, *On Interpretation*, but also the *Isagoge* of Porphyry. Boethius, who translated the *Organon* early in the sixth century, had written commentaries on these three texts, and these works also belong to the “old logic.” See E. Stump, *Boethius’ ‘De topicis differentiis’*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978, pp. 13–26; 159–78.
- 83 See B. Munk-Olsen, “L’Humanisme de Jean de Salisbury, un cicéronien au xii^e siècle,” in *Entretiens*, pp. 59–60; 80; and G. Leff, *Medieval Thought: St. Augustine to Ockham*, Baltimore, Md.: Penguin, 1958, p. 125.
- 84 See E. Vance, *From Topic to Tale: Logic and Narrativity in the Middle Ages*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987; T. Hunt, “The Dialectic of Yvain,” *MLR*, 72 (1977), 285–99, and Hunt, “Aristotle, Dialectic, and Courtly Literature,” *Viator* 10 (1979), 96–102.
- 85 Notably that of James of Venice, ca. 1130. See L. Minio-Paluello, “Iacobus Veneticus Grecus, Canonist and Translator of Aristotle,” *Traditio*, 8 (1952), 265–304; S. Ebbesen, “Iacobus Veneticus on the *Posterior Analytics* and Some Early thirteenth-Century Oxford Masters on the *Elenchi*,” *Université de Copenhague: Cahiers de l’Institut du Moyen Age grec et latin*, 21 (1977), 1–9; cf. Jeaneau, *Philosophie*, p. 19.
- 86 In asserting that the bloodstains on her sheets stem from her nosebleed, the queen too proposes a sophistical refutation, the “taking as a cause what is not a cause” (167b 21).
- 87 Cf. Vance, *Topic to Tale*, pp. 47–48.

4 THE SPECULAR ENCOUNTER IN FICTIONS OF LINEAGE

- 1 *Le Monde*, January 12–13, 1986, from a story in *Erev Chabbat*, Jerusalem.
- 2 *La Fille du comte de Pontieu*, ed. C. Brunel, Paris: Champion, 1926. Numbers in parentheses designate line numbers in the text.
- 3 This moment is unique in an androcentric story that perceives her in relation to males. See also E. B. Vitz, “Story, Chronicle, History: *La Fille du comte de Pontieu*,” in *Medieval Narrative and Modern Narratology: Subjects and Objects of Desire*, New York University Press, 1989, pp. 96–125.
- 4 See B. E. Perry, *The Ancient Romances: a Literary-Historical Account of Their Origins*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967, pp. 285–93; and E. Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre: Medieval and Renaissance Themes and Variations, Including a text and translation of “The Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri”*, Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991.

- 5 See G. Lemieux, *Placide-Eustache: Sources et parallèles du conte type 938*, Québec: Les Presses de l'Université de Laval, 1970; and C. Bremond, "La Famille séparée," *Com*, 39 (1984), 4–45.
- 6 *Guillaume d'Angleterre*, ed. M. Wilmotte, Paris: Champion, 1927, 83–86.
- 7 *La Vie de Saint Eustace, Version en prose française du XIII^e siècle*, ed. J. Murray, Paris: Champion, 1929, sections xxviii–xxxviii.
- 8 On the "cynegetic model" of recognition, see T. Cave, *Recognitions: A Study in Poetics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, p. 251.
- 9 See S. Sturm-Maddox, "'Si m'est jugie et destinee': On *Guillaume d'Angleterre*," in *Sower*, pp. 66–80.
- 10 On its status as "nouvelle," see Brunel, *La Fille*, p. iii: "on doit la considérer comme la plus ancienne nouvelle en prose française. Elle apparaît déjà avec le caractère très net de ce genre littéraire." But see more recently R. Dubuis, *Les Cent nouvelles nouvelles et la tradition de la nouvelle en France au Moyen Age*, Grenoble: Presses Universitaires, 1973, p. 526.
- 11 See J. Crow, "The Art of the Medieval Conteur: A Study of *La Fille du comte de Pontieu*," *FS*, 30 (1976), 1–18; Vitz, "Story, Chronicle, History," pp. 107–17; and H. White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, pp. 1–25.
- 12 See L. Gênicot, *Les Généalogies*, Turnhout: Brépols, 1975, pp. 11–44; and G. Spiegel, "Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historical Narrative," *HT*, 22 (1983), 43–53. Cf. B. Guenée, *Politique et histoire au Moyen Age: Recueil d'articles sur l'histoire politique et l'historiographie médiévale*, Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1981, p. 357.
- 13 See Gênicot, *Généalogies*, pp. 14–15.
- 14 See G. Duby, "Structures de parenté et noblesse dans la France du Nord aux XI^e et XII^e siècles," in *Hommes et structures au Moyen Age*, The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1973, pp. 267–85.
- 15 K. F. Werner, "Untersuchungen zur Frühzeit des französischen Fürstentums," *WG*, 20 (1960), pp. 116–18; Gênicot, *Généalogies*, p. 42n36; G. Duby, "Remarques sur la littérature généalogique en France aux XI^e et XII^e siècles," in *Hommes*, p. 296.
- 16 *Genealogia nobilissorum Francorum imperatorum et regum*, MGH/S, vol. ix, p. 303. On this document, see L. Gênicot, "Princes territoriaux et sang carolingien: La *Genealogia Comitum Bulonensium*," in *Etudes sur les principautés lotharingiennes*, Louvain: Université, 1974, pp. 217–306; Duby, "Remarques," in *Hommes*, p. 292; Duby, "Structures de parenté et noblesse," in *Hommes*, pp. 280–81.
- 17 G. Spiegel, "Maternity and Monstrosity: Reproductive Biology in the *Roman de Mélusine*," in *Mélusine*, p. 107.
- 18 Cf. Duby, "Remarques," in *Hommes*, p. 292: "Ainsi s'introduit dans la conscience de la haute aristocratie un schéma de parenté que l'on peut définir brièvement: filiation strictement agnatique, le titre – à l'instar du titre royal – se transmet de père en fils; mais comme il arrive parfois que le titre ou la vocation à la puissance s'hérite par l'effet d'une alliance . . . le fil généalogique en remontant vers le passé

- peut subir des décrochements, abandonner la lignée patrilinéaire moins illustre pour, à partir de telle aïeule dont les descendants ont conscience de tirer un héritage plus éclatant, remonter de fils en père cette lignée plus honorable” (my emphasis).
- 19 *Historia comitum Ghisnensium*, MGH/S, vol. xxiv.
 - 20 See also D. Régnier-Bohler, “Figures féminines et imaginaire généalogique: Etude comparée de quelques récits brefs,” in *Le Récit*, pp. 73–95.
 - 21 On the location of this sultanate, see G. Paris, “La Légende de Saladin,” *Journal des Savants* (May 1893), 358.
 - 22 Much has been written about the medieval metamorphoses of Saladin’s image, from early negative depictions following the fall of Jerusalem in 1187, to later portrayals of a sensitive, cultivated, “Westernized” diplomat. For a recent review of the question, see G. Ligato, “Continuità e eccezioni nella leggenda di Saladino,” *QM*, 36 (1993), 6–29.
 - 23 For a description of BN fr. 25462, see H. Omont, *Catalogue des manuscrits français de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, (Paris: Leroux, 1902), vol. II, pp. 602–4; R. F. Cook and L. Crist, *Le Deuxième cycle de la Croisade: Deux études sur son développement*, Geneva: Droz, 1972, pp. 129–30; and H. Kjellman, “Les Rédactions en prose de l’Ordre de chevalerie,” *SMS*, 7 (1920), 139–77.
 - 24 Brunel, *La Fille*, p. 44.
 - 25 For detailed comparison of the two versions edited in parallel by Brunel (one from BN fr. 25462, the other extant in BN fr. 770 and 12203), see Crow, “Art of the Medieval Conteuer,” pp. 2–16.
 - 26 This work exists in two manuscripts, BN fr. 770 and 12203; an edition of the former appears in Brunel, *La Fille*, pp. 1–44. See M. Jubb, “The *Estoires d’Outremer*: History or Entertainment?” in *France*, pp. 173–82, and Crow, “The Art of the Medieval Conteuer,” pp. 1–18.
 - 27 *Jehan d’Avennes, romanzo del xv secolo*, ed. A. M. Finoli, Milan: Cisalpino, 1972; *Saladin: Suite et fin du deuxième Cycle de la Croisade*, ed. L. Crist, Geneva: Droz, 1972.
 - 28 Of this text, Jubb observes: “we see the ultimate result of the Christians’ veneration for Saladin . . . The Saracen’s *vaillance*, *largesse*, and *courtoisie* have exalted him in the popular imagination to the stature of an exemplary, all conquering Alexander.” “The *Estoires*,” p. 181.
 - 29 The *Estoires d’Outremer* expresses this principle: “Si vos avons ore ceste estore contee dou linage et de l’estrassion Salehadin por chou que molt de gens ki ont oï l’estore d’outre mer et les fais dou roi Salehadin ne sorent onques de ques genres il fu estrais, si volons que chil qui no livre liront le sachent” (*La Fille*, pp. 52–53). [We have just told you this story of the lineage and extraction of Saladin because many people who have heard the *Estoires d’Outremer* and the deeds of King Saladin never found out from what line he descended, and we want those who read our book to know this].
 - 30 On pilgrimage as schema, see D. Howard, *Writers and Pilgrims: Medieval Pilgrimage Narratives and Their Posterity*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980, pp. 11–52; J. Demaray, “Pilgrimage in the Source Book of the World,” in *The Invention of Dante’s Commedia*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale

- University Press, 1974, pp. 9–47; D. Maddox, “Pilgrimage Narrative and Meaning in Manuscripts L and A of the *Vie de Saint Alexis*,” *RPh*, 27 (1973), 143–57. On cultural implications see V. and E. Turner, “Pilgrimage as a Liminoid Phenomenon,” in *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1978, pp. 1–39, 172–202.
- 31 See J. Sumption, *Pilgrimage: an Image of Medieval Religion*, Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1976.
- 32 Cf. Vitz, “Story, Chronicle, History,” in *Medieval Narrative*, p. 104.
- 33 *La Vie de Saint Alexis*, ed. C. Storey, Oxford: Blackwell, 1968, 25.
- 34 Her tumultuous itinerary through various types of abuse and exploitation by men is akin to a narrative pattern found elsewhere, as in Boccaccio’s story of the tribulations of Alatiel (*Decameron*, II, 7).
- 35 See Brunel, *La Fille*, p. 20.
- 36 An early epic prototype of such boundary-transgression is the figure of Ganelon. See P. Van Nuffel, “Problèmes de sémiotique interprétative: L’Epopée,” *LR*, 27 (1973), 150–62; and L. Marin, *Sémiotique de la Passion: Topiques et figures*, Paris: Bibliothèque des Sciences Religieuses, 1971.
- 37 Other contemporaneous portraits of Saladin attempt to relate him in various ways to Christian feudal spheres. Cf. G. Paris on the “récits légendaires sur Saladin [qui] lui sont favorables. Les uns se contentent de célébrer ses vertus, les autres s’efforcent de le rapprocher des chrétiens en lui attribuant une disposition, plus ou moins suivie d’effet, à reconnaître et à professer la foi des chrétiens.” G. Paris, “La Légende de Saladin,” *Journal des Savants* (May 1893), p. 289.
- 38 N. Z. Davis, “Métissage culturel et médiation historique,” *Le Monde*, June 18–19, 1995, p. 11 (excerpts from the seventeenth Conférence Marc Bloch, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris, June 13, 1995).
- 39 See J.-C. Payen, “Une Poétique du génocide joyeux: Devoir de violence et plaisir de tuer dans la *Chanson de Roland*,” *Olifant*, 6 (1979), 226–36; and P. Haidu, *The Subject of Violence: the “Song of Roland” and the Birth of the State*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993, pp. 36–43.
- 40 Jean d’Arras, *Mélusine, roman du xive siècle*, ed. L. Stouff, Dijon: Bernigaud & Privat, 1932.
- 41 Spiegel sums it up well: “in eleventh- and twelfth-century genealogies and genealogical histories, as in the *Roman de Mélusine*, the social capital of the family resides on the female side.” “Maternity and Monstrosity,” p. 107.
- 42 See L. Stouff, *Essai sur Mélusine, roman du xive siècle par Jean d’Arras*, Dijon: Publications de l’Université, 1930, pp. 89–119; L. Harf-Lancner, *Les Fées au Moyen Age: Morgane et Mélusine: La Naissance des fées*, Paris: Champion, 1984, pp. 170, 177–78; and E. Baumgartner, “Fiction and History: the Cypriot Episode in Jean d’Arras’s *Melusine*,” in *Melusine*, pp. 185–200. See also *Actes du Colloque: “Les Lusignans et l’Outre-mer”: Poitiers-Lusignan 20–24 octobre 1993*, ed. C. Mutaftian, Poitiers: Université de Poitiers, 1994.
- 43 On antecedent traditions, see Harf-Lancner, *Fées au Moyen Age*, pp. 79–198; J. Le Goff and E. Le Roy Ladurie, “Mélusine maternelle et défricheuse,” *Annales*

- ESC, 26 (1971), 587–622; C. Lecouteux, *Mélusine et le Chevalier au cygne*, Paris: Payot, 1982; and F. Clier-Colombani, *La Fée Mélusine au Moyen Age*, Paris: Léopard d'Or, 1991.
- 44 See D. Kelly, "The Domestication of the Marvelous in the Melusine Romances," in *Melusine*, pp. 32–47.
- 45 See K. Brownlee, "Melusine's Hybrid Body and the Poetics of Metamorphosis," in *Melusine*, pp. 76–99.
- 46 On interdiction and transgression at the heart of the Melusinian story type, see Harf-Lancner, *Fées au Moyen Age*, pp. 85–117; and C. Lecouteux, "La Structure des légendes mélusiennes," *Annales ESC*, 33 (1978), 294–306.
- 47 To further the claim of his patron, Jean de Berry, to Lusignan, he effectively "blocks" the schema of genealogy traceable to an illustrious ancestor. See J. Taylor, "Melusine's Progeny: Patterns and Perplexities," in *Melusine*, pp. 165–84; and M. Brownlee, "Interference in *Mélusine*," in *Melusine*, 226–40.
- 48 On the motivation and influence of this crime, see R. Pickens, "The Poetics of Paradox in the *Roman de Mélusine*," in *Melusine*, pp. 60–61, and L. De Looze, "'La fourme du pié toute escripte': Melusine and the Entrance into History," in *Melusine*, p. 135.
- 49 Cf. J. d'Arras, *Roman de Mélusine*, pp. 48–51, and *Lancelot*, Ia–IIIa.
- 50 Notable among father–son resemblances, Hervy's story anticipates Raymondin's: like his son, he had encountered and loved a beneficent fairy – who civilized the Forez as Mélusine later did the Poitou, though in the former case no offspring had resulted. See J. d'Arras, *Roman de Mélusine*, p. 15. Cf. Harf-Lancner, *Fées au Moyen Age*, pp. 160–62.
- 51 On the proleptic value of this scene, see S. Sturm-Maddox, "Crossed Destinies: Narrative Programs in the *Roman de Mélusine*," in *Melusine*, pp. 15–17.
- 52 The statuesque image of Presine next to the cenotaph of Elinas also recalls statuary in earlier Arthurian prose romance that commemorates the site of originary or founding events. See C.-A. Van Coolput, "Sur quelques sculptures anthropomorphes dans les romans arthuriens en prose," *Rom*, 108 (1987), 254–67.
- 53 A comparable episode appears in the Franco-Italian prose epic, *Aquilon de Bavière*, also from the late fourteenth century, in which Roland meets the penitent soul of his grandmother, Gaieté, whose autobiographical account evokes the Carolingian past as depicted in *Berte aux grands pieds* and other epics. See P. Wunderli, "Un Modèle d'intertextualité: L'*Aquilon de Bavière*," in *Carrefour*, 2 vols., vol. II, pp. 1171–72. Gieffroy's feat is also reminiscent of the Carole Magique in the Prose *Lancelot*, for it too serves as a "time capsule" which, when its secret is finally unlocked, will reestablish continuity within the line.
- 54 J. d'Arras, *Roman de Mélusine*, pp. 302–07. Although its premises are unique, this Custom of the Sparrow Hawk recalls the initial segment of Chrétien's *Erec et Enide*, "Li premiers vers." On literary customs here and elsewhere in the epilogue, see D. Maddox, "Configuring the Epilogue: Ending and the Ends of Fiction in the *Roman de Mélusine*," in *Melusine*, pp. 267–87.

- 55 On discursive mechanisms used to promote its reception as a true chronicle, see M. Perret, "L'In vraisemblable vérité: Témoignage fantastique dans deux romans des xiv^e et xv^e siècles," *Eur*, 654 (1983), 25–35; on its fictive properties, in contrast with Joinville and Froissart, see Perret, "Writing History/Writing Fiction," in *Melusine*, pp. 201–25.
- 56 See also S. Nichols, "Melusine Between Myth and History: Profile of a Female Demon," in *Melusine*, pp. 137–64. The verse romance of *Melusine* by Coudrette, *Le Roman de Mélusine ou Histoire de Lusignan*, ed. E. Roach, Paris: Klincksieck, 1982, which appeared some ten years after Jean's romance, is comparable in the way it sustains an opposing political agenda. See Harf-Lancner, in the introduction to her French translation of Coudrette, Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1993, pp. 1–19.
- 57 In the epilogue Jean deploys certain devices, such as the literary custom and the figure of metalepsis, in order to historicize his account of the dynasty's decline and to enhance the viability of his patron's claim. See Maddox, "Configuring the Epilogue," pp. 269–83.
- 58 See D. Maddox, "Kinship Alliances in the *Cligés* of Chrétien de Troyes," *ECr*, 12 (1972), 3–12.
- 59 See also Harf-Lancner, *Fées au Moyen Age*, p. 333; and L. Paton, *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance*, New York: Burt Franklin, 1960, repr. of 1903 edition, pp. 176–78.
- 60 *Lancelot: Roman en prose du XIII^e siècle*, ed. A. Micha, Geneva: Droz, 1979, vol. IV, LXXVIII, paras. 45–58, pp. 201–11. On this passage, see E. Kennedy, *Lancelot and the Grail*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, pp. 279, 284–85.
- 61 *Enéas: Roman du XI^e siècle*, ed. J.-J. Salverda de Grave, Paris, Champion, 1968, 2161–218; 2839–996.
- 62 See D. Poirion, "De l'*Enéide* à l'*Enéas*: Mythologie et moralisation," *CCM*, 19 (1976), 213–29.
- 63 L. Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: the Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987, pp. 174–75.
- 64 See also R. Cormier, *One Heart, One Mind: The Rebirth of Virgil's Hero in Medieval French Romance*, University, Miss.: French Literature Publication Company, 1973, pp. 178–87. Curiously, J.-C. Huchet discusses the *Enéas* as a "roman spéculaire" without mentioning the fundamental specularity of *Enéas*'s crucial encounter with his father. See *Le Roman médiéval*, Paris: Hachette, 1984, pp. 81–110.
- 65 C. Lévi-Strauss, "Anthropologie sociale," *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 74^e Année, 303–9, republished in *Paroles données*, Paris: Plon, 1984, pp. 129–37, with an addendum, pp. 138–40, by André Zavriew, "The Waste Land and the Hot House," summarizing Lévi-Strauss's lecture on Chrétien de Troyes, Wolfram von Eschenbach, and Wagner at the French Institute in London, on October 3, 1975. See also Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale deux*, Paris: Plon, 1970, pp. 31–5, and "De Chrétien de Troyes à Richard Wagner," in *PBF*, 1 1975, 1–6; 60–65, which reappears, slightly expanded, in Lévi-Strauss, *Le Regard éloigné*, Paris: Plon, 1983, pp. 301–24.

- 66 See *Le Regard éloigné*, p. 314.
- 67 Lévi-Strauss, *Le Regard éloigné*, pp. 314–15; *Paroles données*, pp. 136–7.
- 68 See also J.-G. Gouttebroze, “L’Arrière-plan psychique et mythique de l’itinéraire de Perceval dans le *Conte du graal*,” in *Voyage*, pp. 340–52; C. Méla, “Perceval,” *YFS*, 55/56 (1971), 374–440; S. Sturm-Maddox, “Lévi-Strauss in the Waste Forest,” *ECr*, 18 (1978), 82–94; J.-J. Vincensini, *Pensée mythique et narrations médiévales*, Paris: Champion, 1996, pp. 183, 272.
- 69 When Chrétien’s romance abruptly ends, Perceval has in fact already fulfilled his vow to penetrate the castle’s enigma and has learned the secrets of his lineage: Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Roman de Perceval, ou le conte du graal*, ed. W. Roach, Geneva, 1959, 4728–40; 6388–513. For Perceval’s visits to the Grail Castle in the Continuations, see *The Continuations of the Old French “Perceval” of Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. W. Roach: vol. iv: *The Second Continuation*, E 32265–594; P 34611–934; vol. v: *The Third Continuation*, by Manessier, 32595–33183; P 34935–35551; 41861–42637; P 44605–45374. Gerbert’s Continuation begins with Perceval’s second visit to the Grail Castle and ends with yet another: Gerbert de Montreuil, *La Continuation de Perceval*, vols. 1 and 11, ed. M. Williams, Paris: Champion, 1922; 1925, and vol. 111, ed. M. Oswald, Paris: Champion, 1975.
- 70 On the beleaguered realm of the Grail Castle, see the *Conte du graal*, 4669–83. In *Le Bel Inconnu*, Blonde Esmeree’s realm, called “la Cité Gaste” (2775) and described as a waste land – (2797–808; 2871–72): “En la cité homme n’avoit; / Tote gaste la vile estoit” (3320–80) [There was not a soul in the fortified city, and the whole town was a wasteland]. – is the site of numerous enchantments.
- 71 In analogous passages from two manuscripts that link the Prose *Merlin* of Robert de Boron with the Didot *Perceval*, as discussed in Chapter Three (BN nouv. acq. fr. 4166 and 3.39 in the Estense Library, Modena). See Robert de Boron, *Merlin: Roman du XIII^e siècle*, ed. Micha, pp. 293–98 (Modena), and 298–302 (Paris).
- 72 This *archival function* on the part of influential female figures in our schema is not indicative that medieval romance is a particularly “gynocentric” genre, however, for feminine tutelary roles normally serve “masculist” objectives, which is hardly surprising in view of prevalent norms in most medieval cultural contexts. On gender and the construction of female readers in medieval romances, see R. Krueger, *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance*, Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- 73 Positive portrayals of women as purveyors of nurturance and knowledge in medieval romance are by no means confined to instances of specular encounter, but they often coexist uneasily elsewhere in romance with misogynistic attitudes, as Simon Gaunt has recently observed: “The attitude of *romanciers* to women is a perfect example of aporia. Women are made into signs of such immense value that masculine identity is defined through women and this leads to apparently fulsome praise of them; yet at the same time *romanciers* do not like women. The ideal woman is represented as a fiction, and this fiction is underscored by a misogynistic model of femininity, according to which women are bad readers and consequently unworthy signs in a masculine discourse. The fiction of the ideal woman is underscored by the notion that real women cannot live up to the

- ideal.” Simon Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 114. Within the context of this larger picture, one might hypothesize with regard to our schema that female informants who furnish identity disclosures are normally located closer to the ideal end of the spectrum, as well as closer to mothers and mother-surrogates, natural or supernatural.
- 74 E. Köhler, *Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der höfischen Epik*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1956.
- 75 On the historiographic domain see G. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: the Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993. On literary engagement of such issues, see J. Kellogg, *Medieval Artistry and Exchange: Economic Institutions, Society, and Literary Form in Old French Narrative*, New York: Peter Lang, 1989; and, with emphasis on Thomas’s *Tristan* and Chrétien’s *Erec* and *Conte du graal*, D. Delcourt, *L’Ethique du changement dans le roman du XII^e siècle*, Geneva: Droz, 1990. On “romances of land and lineage” in the Anglo-Norman sphere, see S. Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986, chapters one and two, pp. 13–91, and W. Calin, *The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England*, University of Toronto Press, 1994, pp. 22–87.
- 76 See Duby, “Remarques,” in *Hommes*, pp. 289–98; Génicot, *Les Généalogies*; Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, pp. 79–87; 203–17; and Spiegel, “Genealogy,” 47–53.
- 77 Cf. G. Spiegel, “History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages,” *Speculum* 65 (1990), 59–86.
- 78 The atypical case in this regard is the hero of the Prose *Lancelot*, some of whose later encounters with the past relativize the significance of his own deeds. Yet even these are viewed as vital accessories to the foretold achievements of his long-anticipated son, Galaad.
- 79 S. Freud, “Family Romances” (1909), *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, London: Hogarth, 1959, vol. ix, pp. 238–39.
- 80 M. Robert, *Roman des origines et origines du roman*, Paris: Grasset, 1972. See also C. van Boheemen-Saaf, *The Novel as Family Romance: Language, Gender, and Authority from Fielding to Joyce*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987, esp. “The Fiction of Identity,” pp. 13–43.
- 81 F. Wolfzettel considers the Prose *Lancelot* in terms of a variant of family romance: “Lancelot et les fées: Essai d’une lecture psychanalytique du *Lancelot* en Prose,” *MR*, 32 (1982), 25–43.
- 82 Cf. Kennedy, *Lancelot and the Grail*, pp. 10–48. See *Les Lais anonymes des XII^e et XIII^e siècles*, ed. P. Tobin, Geneva: Droz, 1976, pp. 21–76, for a discussion of pertinent traditions and sources.
- 83 On “introjection” and “projection” in an object-relations theory of psychoanalysis, see M. Klein, *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921–1945*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1977, pp. 219–32.

- 84 J. Lacan, “D’une question préliminaire à tout traitement possible de la psychose,” in *Ecrits II*, Paris: Seuil, 1971, pp. 43–102.
- 85 It is a question “non pas du père réel, mais de ce que la religion nous a appris à invoquer comme le Nom-du-Père.” Lacan, *Ecrits II* p. 72; concerning the potential relations between the literal and metaphorical paternal levels, see pp. 92–102.
- 86 Cf. J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith, New York: Norton, 1973, pp. 210; 439–41.
- 87 For studies of modern British and American novels that reflect key aspects of this pattern, see the essays in *Father*.
- 88 Lacan locates this primitive phase of individuation between the ages of six and eighteen months and characterizes it as the stage in which the infant conceives of its own bodily unity and thus fashions the first, imaginary outlines of the ego. See J. Lacan, “Le Stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je, telle qu’elle nous est révélée dans l’expérience psychanalytique,” *Ecrits I*, Paris: Seuil, 1966, pp. 89–97.
- 89 In the Lacanian conceptualization of the subject, the Symbolic Order is never totally isolated from the Imaginary, and the two are understood as being interactive. Cf. J. H. Smith, “Lacan and the Subject of American Psychoanalysis,” in *Interpreting Lacan*, ed. J. H. Smith *et al.*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983, p. 268: “The definitive passage to the Symbolic order, the world of language, law, and institutions, is by way of the oedipal crisis. The passage does not do away with the Imaginary. On the contrary, it is in the light of the Symbolic order that the Imaginary is situated *as* imaginary.” As for the Mirror Stage, G. Hartman, in “Psychoanalysis: The French Connection,” in *Psychoanalysis*, observes that “the question of what corresponds to the mirror phase on the level of language (to its unifying if illusory effect) may seem unanswerable in terms of Lacanian psychiatry (*sic*)” (p. 93). The possible answer he explores is that of the name as specular image in the writings of Genet and Benjamin. What I am suggesting here is another possible answer, which is that of the interaction of the Symbolic and Imaginary Orders in the specular story, which is alloyed with elements from both domains so as to reconstitute and virtualize the narratee’s subjectivity.
- 90 “Specular captivity” denotes the subject’s affective identification with an externalized self-image as represented in a name, a genealogy, a fiction, or other cultural investment of selfhood. This image may glorify or degrade the subject’s conception of the self in a manner that is at odds with the reality of a given situation. For examples of this phenomenon with regard to naming, see Hartman, “Psychoanalysis,” pp. 99–105; 108–12. The emerging feudal nobility’s affective investment in representations – whether discursive or emblematic, as in heraldic blason – of illustrious genealogies could likewise be seen as a form of specular captivity on a collective scale.
- 91 Tydorel’s regressive response to the eccentric myth of his own genesis brings to mind Lacan’s characterization of the morbid specular encounter in psychosis, in which “identity [is] reduced to confrontation with one’s psychic double, but

which also confirms the subject's regression . . . to the mirror stage, though only to the extent that the relationship to the specular other is reduced to its mortal dimension." Lacan, "D'Une question préliminaire," *Ecrits II*, p. 85.

- 92 The aqueous denouement of *Tydorel* is suggestive of a fictive medieval case study of psychosis at its inception. The circumstances are particularly evocative of what Lacan had to say about the Freudian concept of "foreclosure," which he eventually designated as "foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father in the place of the Other," or the unconscious. Foreclosure is tantamount to the kind of failure of the paternal metaphor which conditions psychosis (*ibid.*, pp. 92–102). "For the onset of psychosis to occur," observes Lacan, "the Name-of-the-Father, *verworfen*, foreclosed upon, that is, never having arrived at the place of the Other, must be summoned there in symbolic opposition to the subject." Here we can locate the functional value of the mother's specular story, which provides evidence of the missing component of the unconscious, what Lacan calls "Un-père." The onset of foreclosure is always marked by a "call" from some external agency which sets the paternal metaphor into opposition with the paternal deficit in the subject's psychic economy. In our medieval example, the mother's story of "Un-père" provides such a call, initiating a process evocative of morbid psychic regression. Continuing with Lacan: "It is the failure of the Name-of-the-Father in this locus which, through the hole that it opens onto the signified, initiates the cascade of revisions of the signifier, whence proceeds the growing disaster of the imaginary, up to the level at which signifier and signified stabilize in the metaphor of delirium" (*ibid.*, p. 95, translation my own). While this account refers directly to Freud's study of President Schreber's psychotic delirium, it is also suggestively evocative of Tydorel's regression, not to delirium, but rather to *entropy* following the disclosure, by the mother's story, of the nonprescriptive, and thus defective, paternal metaphor. The father's evanescence is ultimately a signifier for which no signified is ever given. In consequence, no monovalent ethical coherence is perceptible, and there is no evidence whatsoever that the paternal signifier effects any heuristic mediation of contradictory realms or positively valorizes the filial emulation of a paternal gesture which appears to be abdicative in the extreme. See also, on the "unlocatable father" in *Raoul de Cambrai*, A. Leupin, "Raoul de Cambrai: The Illegitimacy of Writing," in *New*, pp. 134–44.
- 93 Cf. J. Lacan on "the constitution of the subject in the field of the Other." *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. A. Sheridan, New York: Norton, 1981, p. 208.
- 94 Cf. J. Lacan: "A lack is encountered by the subject in the Other, in the very intimation that the Other makes to him by his discourse." in *Concepts*, p. 214.
- 95 Lacan, *ibid.*, pp. 263–76.
- 96 "Turning towards me you can find / On the wall of my gaze only your dreamt-of shadow" From *Fou d'Elsa*, "Contre-chant," cited by Lacan, *ibid.*, p. 17 (translation of Eluard by A. Sheridan).

AFTERWORD

- 1 Cf. C. Segre's distinction between a basic "schema of representability" and its specific "linguistic realizations": "Dal motivo alla funzione, e viceversa," in *Notizie dalla crisi: Dove va la critica letteraria?*, Turin: Einaudi, 1993, p. 217.
- 2 C. Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," in *Myth*, pp. 81–106: "The purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction" (p. 105); cf. G. S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Function in Ancient and Other Cultures*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970, pp. 42–83.
- 3 See the chapter on "universal history" in B. Smalley, *Historians in the Middle Ages*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1974, pp. 95–105; and M. D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, eds. and trans. J. E. Taylor and L. Little, University of Chicago Press, 1968, pp. 163–85.
- 4 In *Confessions*, VIII, 12, Augustine, lying beneath a fig tree weeping, acutely distraught over his sinful state, "heard the singsong voice of a child in a nearby house. Whether it was the voice of a boy or a girl I cannot say, but again and again it repeated the refrain 'Take it and read, take it and read' ['tolle, lege']. At this I looked up, thinking hard whether there was any kind of game in which children used to chant words like these, but I could not remember ever hearing them before. I stemmed my flood of tears and stood up, *telling myself that this could only be a divine command to open my book of Scripture and read the first passage on which my eyes should fall* . . . I seized [the book containing Paul's Epistles] and opened it, and in silence I read the first passage on which my eyes fell: 'Not in reveling and drunkenness, not in lust and wantonness, not in quarrels and rivalries. Rather, arm yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ; spend no more thought on nature and nature's appetites' [Rom. 13:13–14]. I had no wish to read more and no need to do so. For in an instant, as I came to the end of the sentence, it was as though the light of confidence flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled." Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin, Baltimore, Md.: Penguin, 1961, pp. 177–78, my emphasis.
- 5 See R. Hanning, *The Vision of History in Early Britain: From Gildas to Geoffrey of Monmouth*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1966, pp. 34–37; p. 190n126. Augustine is fond of comparing individual experience and historical process, as in his homologation of the six ages of the individual, from infancy to old age, and the six ages of the world, from Adam to the end of time. See Augustine, *De Diversis Quaestionibus* LXXXIII, Bk. I, Qu. LVIII, PL 40, 43; and J. Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, pp. 80–85.
- 6 On the role of scripture in the writing of sacred history, see Chenu, *Nature*, p. 163. Specular revelations abound in Biblical accounts, notably of dreams and visions, which were glossed in exegetical commentaries and recalled as instructive illustrations, as for example God's promise of a son to Abraham (Gen. 15), or the

- promise of dynastic prosperity in Jacob's dream of the ascending ladder (Gen. 28). Biblical informants constituted by dreams and visions include Joseph, who elucidates the Pharaoh's dreams in Gen. 37, 40, and 41, and Daniel, in Dan. 2, 5, 7, and 8. Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus was often cited as a prototype of hagiographic conversions, as in the life of Eustace. On the Augustinian heritage, see P. Courcelle, *Les "Confessions" de Saint Augustin dans la tradition littéraire: Antécédents et postérité*, Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1963; J. Freccero, *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986, pp. 1–118; 136–51; 180–85; and S. Sturm-Maddox, in "Augustine's Story: The Confessional Subtext," *Petrarch's Metamorphoses: Text and Subtext in the "Rime Sparse"*, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985, pp. 95–126.
- 7 Both creatures are nonetheless mediatory informants. On the mediatory stag, see F. Dubost, "Les Merveilles du cerf: Miracles, métamorphoses, médiations," *RLR*, 98 (1994), 287–310.
 - 8 As in the forty thirteenth-century *Miracles de Nostre Dame par personnages* (MS Cangé, BN fr. 819–20), eds. G. Paris and U. Robert, 8 vols., Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1876–1893. See E. Konigson, "Structures élémentaires de quelques fictions dramatiques dans les *Miracles de Nostre Dame par personnages*," *RHT*, 29 (1977), 105–27.
 - 9 As, for example, in successive versions of the *Vie de Saint Alexis*: in the twelfth-century Hildesheim manuscript (MS L), the supernatural admonition to the Romans to seek the body of Alexis is tersely reported in indirect discourse. See *La Vie de Saint Alexis*, ed. C. Storey, Oxford: Blackwell, 1968, 291–300. In the corresponding passage in MS P (BN fr. 2162, thirteenth century), a celestial voice twice addresses the Romans in direct discourse. See C. Stebbins, ed., *A Critical Edition of the thirteenth and fourteenth Centuries Old French Poem Versions of the "Vie de Saint Alexis"*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1974, p. 46, verses 726–45; cf. BN MS 244 de la ville d'Avranches (fourteenth century), *ibid.*, p. 120, verses 729–44. In the Carlisle manuscript (M², thirteenth century), a celestial voice first comforts the dying Alexis, then addresses the Romans at length concerning Alexis and his whereabouts. See A. G. Elliott, *The "Vie de Saint Alexis" in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries: an Edition and Commentary*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1983, pp. 174–75, verses 757–81.
 - 10 See S. Nichols, *Romanesque Signs: Early Medieval Narrative and Iconography*, New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 1983, pp. 148–203.
 - 11 *La Chanson de Roland*, ed. C. Segre, Geneva: Droz, 1989.
 - 12 On dreams as divine messages in the Oxford *Roland* and elsewhere, see G. Brault, *The "Song of Roland," An Analytical Edition: 1. Introduction and Commentary*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978, pp. 163–65, and pp. 405–06 for ample bibliography. In the epic version of *Ami et Amile*, an angel informs Ami, following the latter's *prière du plus grand peril*, of the scourge of leprosy that will befall him. *Ami et Amile: Chanson de geste*, ed. P. Dembowski, Paris: Champion, 1969, verses 1806–20. The common hagiographic and epic motif of the heavenly messenger offering proleptic guidance to Christians is

featured in two scenes in Jehan Bodel's *Jeu de Saint Nicolas*, ed. A. Henry, Brussels: Presses Universitaires, 1965, where an angel addresses recently massacred Christian knights (466–81) and later consoles the imprisoned Preudome (1262–73).

- 13 For example, the rhymed versions of the *Chanson de Roland* reveal the horror of Roncevaux to Aude in a series of vivid dreams. See S. Kay, *The "Chansons de geste" in the Age of Romance*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, pp. 209–11. In *Daurel et Beton*, Daurel reveals the identity of Beton's true father; see Kay, "Chansons", pp. 202–04. The pertinence of Freudian "family romance" has been demonstrated in later epics: Kay, "Chansons", pp. 79–115. See also T. Fenster, "The Family Romance of *Aye d'Avignon*," *RQ*, 33 (1986), 11–22.
- 14 For diverging views on the Cistercian background reflected in the *Queste*, see E. Gilson, "La Mystique de la grâce dans la *Queste del Saint Graal*," *Rom*, 51 (1925), 321–47; P. Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry: a Study of the "Queste del Saint Graal"*, Geneva: Droz, 1979, pp. 205–41; J. Frappier, "Le Graal et la chevalerie," in *Rom*, (1954), p. 177; and E. Baumgartner, *L'Arbre et le pain: Essai sur la "Queste del Saint Graal"*, Paris: SEDES, 1981, pp. 42–45.
- 15 In particular, economically destabilized aristocracies and warring monarchies. The ideological emphases of French Arthurian prose cycles is a complex question that obviously exceeds the scope of this study. The need to address it in an extensive study is reinforced by tendencies in related contemporaneous spheres, such as the use of prose histories for political consolidation by the Flemish aristocracy and subsequently by the late Capetian monarchy. On this, see G. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: the Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993, pp. 11–54; 214–313.
- 16 On this series of *épreuves* comprising the so-called *schéma narratif*, see A. J. Greimas and J. Courtés, "schéma narratif," in *Sémiotique: Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*, Paris: Hachette, 1979, pp. 244–47.
- 17 Respectively, these concern the alethic, epistemic, and veridictory modalities. For the first two, see J.-L. Gardiès, *Essai sur la logique des modalités*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979; for the third, see D. Maddox, "Veridiction, Verifiction, Verifactions: Reflections on Methodology," *NLH*, 20 (1989), 661–77.
- 18 See A. J. Greimas and J. Fontanille, "L'Épistémologie des passions," in *Sémiotique des passions: Des états des choses aux états d'âme*, Paris: Seuil, 1991, pp. 21–110.
- 19 As, for example, in the speculative and hypothetical ratiocinations moving laboriously toward assent in the monologues in *Cligés*, ed. A. Micha, Paris: Champion, 1957: Alixandre, vv. 618–864; Soredamor, 889–1038; Fénice, 4366–5426.
- 20 On these and other examples, see D. Maddox, "Rewriting Recognition in Early Medieval Veridictory Drama," in *Continuations*, pp. 277–95.
- 21 See also T. Cave, "Recognition and the Reader," *CC*, 2 (1980), 50.
- 22 In keeping with the moment of recognition centering salvation history, or *historia*. Asserting a comparable relationship between "Christian rite and Christian drama" on the basis of their inverse development of the tragic pattern

identified by Aristotle, Hardison suggests that the underlying ritual form of liturgical ceremonies characteristically involves a sequence of spiritual struggle, or *agon*, followed by a dramatic reversal accompanied by collective recognition and *gaudium*, or communal rejoicing. In Hardison's view, the Resurrection would be the principal locus of peripeteia and in the Christian myth. See O. B. Hardison, Jr., *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages*, Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965, p. 40. This moment is explicitly signified in the Easter *Quem Quaeritis* trope whose metamorphoses and avatars recur for centuries in Latin and vernacular contexts. See K. Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933, for texts of the *Quem quaeritis* tropes, plays from the Fleury collection, and other liturgical and semiliturgical texts, and J. Drumbly, *Quem Quaeritis: Teatro sacro dell'alto medioevo*, Rome: Bulzoni, 1981. As in the "dying and reviving god" pattern of ancient cultic drama, Christian drama takes as its primary locus of recognition the moment at which mediation of the most fundamental of all human contradictions, that between life and death, is ritually reactualized. If not actually replicated in liturgical and semi-liturgical drama, it is either celebrated in its effects, as in saints' plays evoking the christological pattern as model, or else anticipated, as in the Fleury Herod plays and the *Raising of Lazarus*. To reinforce this cognitive pattern, liturgical drama avails itself of the axiologically valorized spatiality of the sanctuary: E. Konigson, *L'Espace théâtral médiéval*, Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1975.

- 23 A. J. Greimas, "Le Contrat de veridiction," *MW*, 13 (1980), 345–55.
- 24 A. J. Greimas and J. Courtès, "The Cognitive Dimension of Narrative Discourse," *NLH*, 7 (1976), p. 440.
- 25 Jean Bodel: *Fabliaux*, ed. P. Nardin, Paris: Nizet, 1965, "Du vilain de Bailleul," 29–107.
- 26 Douin de Lavesne, *Trubert, fabliau du XIII^e siècle*, ed. G. Raynaud de Lage, Geneva: Droz, 1974. See K. Gravdal, *Vilain and Courtois: Transgressive Parody in French Literature of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989, pp. 113–40; C. Donà, *Trubert, o la carriera di un furfante*, Parma: Pratiche, 1994; and K. Busby, "The Diabolic Hero in Medieval French Narrative: *Trubert* and *Wistasse le Moine*," in *Court*, pp. 415–26.
- 27 See also R. Brusegan, "Jean de Meun, Alhazen, Witelo: Influenza delle teorie medievali della visione sul *Roman de la rose*," in *Folena*, pp. 263–79, who discusses medieval theories of optics and catoptric phenomena in relation to thirteenth-century French literary examples drawn from Jean de Meun's *Rose*, the fabliaux, and other brief narratives.
- 28 Two collective volumes address major aspects of this subject: *Entretiens and Renaissance*. On the latter, see B. Stock, "Romantic Attitudes and Academic Medievalism," in *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past*, Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990, 52–74.
- 29 K. J. Holzknacht, *Literary Patronage in the Middle Ages*, Philadelphia, Penn.: Collegiate, 1923; J. Bumke, *Mäzene im Mittelalter: die Gönner und Auftraggeber der höfischen Literatur in Deutschland 1150–1300*, Munich: Beck, 1979; D. Tyson,

- "Patronage of French Vernacular History Writers in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," *Rom* (1979), 180–222; G. Duby, "The Culture of the Knightly Class: Audience and Patronage," in *Renaissance*, pp. 248–62; J. H. McCash, ed., *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996.
- 30 See G. Sivéry, *L'Economie du royaume de France au siècle de Saint Louis (vers 1180–vers 1315)*, Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1984.
- 31 Cf. M. Zink, "Une Mutation de la conscience littéraire: Le Langage romanesque à travers des exemples français du XII^e siècle," *CCM*, 24 (1981), 3–27; and Zink, *La Subjectivité littéraire: Autour du Siècle de saint Louis*, Paris: PUF, 1985.
- 32 B. Stock, "Textual Communities," in *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, Princeton University Press, 1983, pp. 88–240; Stock, "Textual Communities: Judaism, Christianity, and the Definitional Problem," in *Listening for the Text*, pp. 140–58. On the text's virtualization of reception, see D. Maddox, "Vers un modèle de la communauté textuelle au Moyen Age: Les Rapports entre auteur et texte, entre texte et lecteur," in *Actes LPR*, vol. VI, pp. 480–90.
- 33 We cannot, of course, indulge the utopian fantasy of limiting our notion of the medieval text's productive reflexivity to the culture contemporaneous with its initial appearance. Reflexivity is not an epochally "pure" phenomenon that can be documented by a detached, "objective" observer remote in time from the phenomena observed. The idealistic assumption that through our research we may in time come close to reconstituting that primordial context neglects the fact that the shreds and shards we do manage to recover are ultimately bonded together with missing pieces that we ourselves have supplied. For the text's reflexive outreach proffers a virtual image of ourselves, as readers. While the effectiveness of our reading ultimately depends on our capacity to perceive reflexive properties, the efficiency with which we do so is clearly a matter of degree, and though this may hinge in part on how effectively the text throws them into particular relief, our perceptions will differ in accordance with many variables: the temporal gap between us and the text; our own background, knowledge, and sensitivity to detail; and, above all, the degree of our own receptivity to the text's reflexive appeals. Cf. the pertinent views of D. Hult, *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First "Roman de la rose"*, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 314.
- 34 P. Haidu, *The Subject of Violence: the "Song of Roland" and the Birth of the State*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993, pp. 188–89, emphasis mine.
- 35 Cf. Haidu, *Subject*, p. 188.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 189. Although there is no mention of Lukács in connection with this distinction between two types of subjectivity, the latter is to some degree anticipated by his distinction between the solidarity binding hero and community characteristic of "epic" and the "estrangement from the outside world" typical of the novelistic hero. G. Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock, Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1971, original Berlin, 1920, pp. 66–67.

- 37 It must be emphasized, however, that this kind of solidarity, though it was in evidence and readily found expression as ideology, was by no means universal prior to its destabilization on several fronts beginning in the twelfth century. It was, rather, a matter of degree. For a vivid account of the intersubjective and ideological conflicts that were seething around the year 1000, see the splendid study by R. Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History: Ademar of Chabannes, 989–1034*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995, and my review of it in *Biography*, 20 (1997), 216–20.
- 38 Among recent studies that address aspects of the “new” subjectivity in twelfth-century French literature: D. Delcourt, *L’Éthique du changement dans le roman du xii^e siècle*, Geneva: Droz, 1990; R. Krueger, *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance*, Cambridge University Press, 1993; M. T. Bruckner, *Shaping Romance: Interpretation, Truth, and Closure in Twelfth-Century French Fictions*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993; S. Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*, Cambridge University Press, 1995; Kay, “Chansons”; and, bridging into the age of prose historiography, Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*.
- 39 On the controversial, much-discussed question of the “individual,” see P. Dronke, *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages: New Departures in Poetry 1000–1150*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, pp. 1–32; C. Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual: 1050–1200*, New York: Harper and Row, 1972; M. Stevens, “The Performing Self in Twelfth-Century Culture,” *Viator*, 9 (1978), 193–217; C. W. Bynum, “Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?” in *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982, pp. 82–109; J. Benton, “Consciousness of Self and Perceptions of Individuality,” in *Renaissance*, pp. 263–95; B. Cazelles, “Outrepasser les normes: L’Invention de soi en France médiévale,” *SFR*, 14 (1990), 69–92; B. Stock, “The Self and Literary Experience in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages,” *NLH*, 25 (1994), 839–52.
- 40 E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: the Promised Land of Error*, trans. B. Bray, New York: Vintage, 1979, p. xvii.
- 41 *Maistre Pierre Pathelin, farce du xve siècle*, ed. R. Holbrook, Paris: Champion, 1924; second edition 1937, 507–1006.
- 42 N. Z. Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983. On the thirteenth-century case of pseudo-Baldwin, see Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*, pp. 51–54.
- 43 “Trois aliénés, qui se croyaient autant de souverains et qui prenaient chacun le titre de Louis XVI, se disputent un jour les droits à la royauté, et les font valoir avec des formes un peu trop énergiques. La surveillante s’approche de l’un d’eux et le tirant un peu à l’écart: Pourquoi, lui dit-elle, entrez-vous en dispute avec ces gens-là qui sont visiblement fous. Ne sait-on pas que vous devez être reconnu pour Louis XVI? Ce dernier, flatté de cet hommage, se retire aussitôt en regardant les deux autres avec une hauteur dédaigneuse. Le même artifice réussit avec le second. Et c’est ainsi que dans un instant il ne reste plus de trace de dispute. C’est là le premier moment, celui de l’exaltation. La folie est appelée à se regarder

elle-même, mais chez les autres . . . [et] comme simple délire, est projetée sur les autres . . .” M. Foucault, *L'Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, Paris: Gallimard, 1972, pp. 517–18, who cites this anecdote from Sémelaigne, *Aliénistes et philanthropes*, p. 502.

- 44 See the numerous incisive discussions of these models in C. Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, in particular those on countertransference, pp. 173–274.
- 45 It is not, however, merely the persistent recurrence of the formal schema that must command our attention, but rather the ceaseless variance of its material investments and their poetic and cultural significance. As Clifford Geertz remarks, “We must, in short, descend into detail, past the misleading tags, past the metaphysical types, past the empty similarities to grasp firmly the essential character of not only the various cultures but the various sorts of individuals within each culture . . .” C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, p. 53.

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